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A MEDAL FOR KASHMIR

By

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To the Lavan

PREFACE

THIS BOOK is the result of my efforts to understand what is broadly known as “the Kashmir issue” myself.

I have seen the issue being fought out on the battlefield; I have heard it being debated abroad; I have argued it out with the ‘common man’ in twentytwo countries. Still, when it came to putting it all in cold print, I found the task none too easy. Behind the Kashmir issue lay all kinds of conflicts, the emotional attachment to the memory of dear friends who fell in defence of Kashmir, the struggle of ideologies, racial memories of the remote past and the immediate present, and innumerable other things small and big, trivial and vital. How was one to encompass all these in a small volume ?

Yet I felt that the attempt had to be made, and the outcome is a book by a layman for the layman. I have viewed the questions involved as one views a mountain peak—from different angles and perspectives. But the spectacles used are purely Indian : I could not help it, being an Indian.

I hope the chapters dealing with life in the Army will be of interest to the citizen who sees the Army only

at ceremonial functions like the Republic Day parade, and the political chapters to the Indian as well as the foreign reader.

I would be the last to claim that this book reflects *the* Indian view, but I do feel that 'Ram Singh' expresses a point of view shared by many Indians.

—T.V.P.

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CHAPTER I

HEART-BREAK IN JAMMU

Ram Singh had been gazing at it for half an hour or more. But he was still unable to take his eyes off his General Service Medal, awarded to him for his part in the Jammu and Kashmir operations, which began in October 1947 and ended with the "cease fire" on January 1, 1949.

A fine medal it was ; the sword and sun on one side and the Kashmir lotus on the other lent it not only beauty but also significance. The lotus had to be protected by the sword. The sun did not really mind what happened ; it shed its life-giving rays on all ; it would keep shining no matter who wielded the sword or who plucked the lotus. Ram Singh's interpretation of the symbolism of the medal might be quite different from what those who had struck it had in mind, but then he liked to imagine that he always did the unexpected and was original in his thoughts. That was one of his amiable weaknesses. If one argued with him, he would retort that had he been like anyone else, he would not have put on the uniform and gone off to Kashmir. He would have been content with his secure job in a newspaper office instead of risking life and limb on a wild goose chase in the hills and valleys of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

What had been his role in Kashmir? He himself did not know. While his comrades had been busy fighting, his business had been to try to understand what it was all about, why it was that men from every nook and corner of India were ready to lay down their lives defending the territories of a State which had joined the Union of India only when there was no other alternative.

He remembered vividly his first impressions of the State, the faces of friends who were no more, and the conversations and arguments he had had in jeeps and bunkers, on hilltops and in river beds, with men speaking different tongues and hailing from diverse States. They had argued about their leaders, about religion, about women, about food, about faiths and beliefs.

It was good to see war when one was 25, if one had to see it. Ram Singh's friends said that he had always wanted to see war, and one reason why he had seized an opportunity to go to Jammu and Kashmir was that he had narrowly missed seeing action in the Second World War. He was to have gone to the Burma front in 1945, after six months' training in Delhi in the finer points of war reporting, but the Japanese surrendered before he had completed his course. He had always blamed the Japanese for having been so thoughtless.

Ram Singh's first introduction to the State of Jammu and Kashmir had been through Jammu. And it had not been too happy.

Jammu appeared beautiful all right as he circled over it in a Dakota one summer morning in 1948. The

hills were too low to be snow-clad. The Jammu hills could in no way be compared to the lofty mountain ranges of Kashmir which had excited the imagination of travellers the world over. But the Jammu hills had a beauty of their own. The broken hills looked like huge ant-hills beckoning to him in a familiar sort of way. It seemed to him that he had been there before. These hills were almost like some of the hills of Malabar where he had spent his childhood. The town too looked quite picturesque—just like any hillside town anywhere in India.

But the dreams of beauty and well-being which the aerial view encouraged one to nurse were rudely shattered when the aircraft touched the ground. Ram Singh's first shock was the weather. He had thought that once he was in State territory, he would have left the Delhi weather behind. But he discovered as soon as he stepped out of the plane that Jammu could be hotter than Delhi.

The enemy had by then overrun all the areas up to Jhangar and Naushera, and Jammu was filled with refugees. Food was short. Sanitation was poor. The hotels were all closed and Ram Singh was put up in the dak bungalow. The cook at the dak bungalow appeared quite new to the job. Many of the old inhabitants had fled even from Jammu and the old cook had apparently left with them.

Life in the dak bungalow—dirty rooms, poor tea and poorer food—fully reflected the misery of life

outside. The Hindus who had fled to Jammu had left all their possessions in the enemy-occupied areas. The Muslim population of Jammu had fled to Pakistan. As in the Punjab, the refugee migrations in Jammu were a two-way traffic. The Muslims who had fled to Pakistan must be suffering in the refugee camps of Pakistan, but that, of course, could be no consolation to the Hindu refugees in Jammu, just as the sufferings of the Hindu refugees could not compensate the Muslim refugees for what they had to undergo.

The plight of the Dogra refugees in Jammu was made worse by political frustration. Ram Singh had been told by Kashmiris in Delhi that Maharaja Hari Singh, who was still nominal ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, was hated in the State. But this was not true at least so far as Jammu was concerned. The "revolutionaries" in fact were conspicuous in Jammu by their absence. The refugees seemed to revere the Maharaja and they resented popular rule which, to them, meant transfer of power to men in the far away valley of Kashmir.

Ram Singh felt that the revolutionaries in the valley were absolutely right in opposing the continuation of the Maharaja even as titular head. The time had come to do away not only with the divine right of kings but even the institution itself. But it was no use glossing over the fact that people in Jammu still regarded the Maharaja as the only person entitled to rule, and the others as usurpers. They were not

politically prepared for popular rule. Perhaps some of the slogans in the valley had been misguided. Instead of talking about the "end of Dogra rule," the National Conference should, perhaps, have fought out its battles against Maharaja's rule without bringing in the racial element. Anyway, to the vast majority of the people of Jammu, including the refugees, the Maharaja was a symbol of their political power which had ebbed away.

It was strange how one remembered the little irritations of life when one had forgotten the big inconveniences. One of the things which Ram Singh would never forget about his stay in Jammu was a rusty, long-horned gramophone on which the owner of a shop next to the dak bungalow used to play a lone record day after day and night after night. The shop-keeper had been a prosperous man in Mirpur, but now all that he had to remind him of the luxurious life he had lived in what had become enemy-held territory, was that wheezy gramophone. The song that came out from the record was by a formerly well-known singer of the film world. Cinema fans said that the singer herself was not very pretty to look at but her golden voice was fetching her a couple of lakhs of rupees every month. Perhaps out of that couple of lakhs she showed the income-tax people Rs. 10,000 or so, but then everyone evaded income-tax and they said that it was not only in India that people tried to dodge taxes but in many European countries too. But what a voice ! It had a peculiar, unspoiled, virgin-like quality

with just a suspicion of huskiness to make one feel what hidden charms lay behind that seductive voice.

That song was the only entertainment Ram Singh had in Jammu for several weeks. But everything had its limit. One could not hear the same song for ever, even the most appealing song. Man loved variety. Slowly, the song began to get on his nerves. He wryly recalled a story narrated by a famous American humorist. The American had longed for years to hear the notes of the bugle in the Swiss Alps. He had read about the bugle, he had seen it in a museum and he dreamt about it. When at last he was able to visit the Swiss Alps, he was, naturally, overjoyed to see a shepherd boy with bugle in hand, just as he had seen in old woodcuts back in the States. "Boy," the American told him, "I will give you a dollar if you will keep bugling till I am out of sight." The boy would have done it for nothing, but then Americans spent dollars like water—till they learnt that they could get things done equally well for cents. Well, the boy blew the bugle so lustily that the American began to fear that he might wake up the dead. After some time, the American came across another shepherd boy, also with a bugle. Perhaps it was the first boy's younger brother. The American made a similar request to the second boy, but instead of giving him a dollar, he could bring himself to part with only fifty cents. Later, the American came across a third bugler. In accordance with the well-known law of demand and

supply, the price of a bugle note had by then dropped to twentyfive cents. When he saw a fourth bugler, the American plugged his ears.

Ram Singh wondered what the shopkeeper would demand if he were to offer to buy that wretched machine and record. Sometimes he had a mind to look up the penal code and find out the maximum punishment he might have to suffer in the event of his breaking into the shop when the shopkeeper was asleep, and destroying those items of salvaged property.

The condition of the refugees grew from bad to worse. Most of them were accommodated in tents in the hot summer but one school building was also available to them. They swarmed over that building like flies. People occupied not only the rooms and verandahs and the terrace but even the staircase. One could see them dozing on the stairs in the afternoon. Ram Singh wondered whether they slept there at night also. The population of the camp kept increasing due to the continued influx as well as natural causes.

The food for the refugees was cooked in an open kitchen. The less said about it the better. Next to the place where they made *puris* in what looked like crude oil, and baked *chappatis* was a foul refuse dump buzzing with flies. Ram Singh asked one of the officers in charge of the camp, "Why don't you shift the refuse dump?" The officer stared at him for some time. Then he asked, "Where would you wish me to remove it?" Ram Singh had no answer to give.

The only way to stop at least further overcrowding was to stop the flow of more refugees from the tents. But to the refugees in the tents, the school building was like an oasis in the desert and there would have been riots if the authorities had tried to stop them from coming over—at least that was what the officer said.

Poverty and squalor led to vice. He wondered how the vice racket could operate in such an overcrowded place. But the underworld somehow managed to get over the difficulty.

Ram Singh never believed in miracles but he did witness one. One day a registered letter came from Delhi that a well-known Minister would visit the refugee camp. The day after that letter arrived, things began to happen. The population of that crowded building was reduced by eighty per cent. There was the smell of fresh lime all over the place. Even the refuse dump was nowhere to be seen. The Minister came and some impressive speeches were heard expressing sympathy for the refugees and acknowledging the "success" of the local authorities in keeping the place so spick and span under such adverse conditions.

Alas ! Like all miracles, the miracle of the vanished refugees proved to be short-lived. All that had happened was that they had been temporarily moved to a tent ten miles away for the duration of the Minister's visit. Hardly had the Minister's plane returned to Delhi

when lorries were despatched to bring them back to the old place. Things became "normal"—including the size of the refuse heap—in twentyfour hours.

The canal was far away and in the building itself there were no facilities for washing. Under those conditions, the hair of some of the women refugees became matted and lice-infested. The doctors became worried and did not know what to do about it, till one of them had a bright idea : why not use D.D.T. for the women's hair ?

The "de-licing" operation by using D.D.T. like talcum powder was pronounced a success. Everyone in the camp seemed happy about it till the news appeared in the newspapers and some angry editorials came to be written. One of the officials who was suspected of having "leaked" the news to a visiting press correspondent was promptly suspended.

The local authorities were very sensitive to criticism. That was one of the legacies of the feudal regime. Kashmir was not an isolated example. There were any number of States which had laid pleasure gardens and built public buildings in places likely to be visited by outsiders. For a time the visitor was impressed by the "progressive" rule of the rulers of those States, the "vast" amount of construction work going on and the "obvious" prosperity of the States. But after a deeper study, one realised that with a few notable exceptions, conditions in Princely India were on the whole worse

than even in "British" India. The administration of the State, badly shaken by the invasion and upset by the change of Government, did whatever it could, but in the circumstances that could only be very little.

What had the people of Jammu done that they should suffer so? The fatalists blamed it on *karma* or their sins in past life but the politically conscious blamed it on Pakistan. The revolutionaries laid the blame at the door of the Maharaja.

When the British decided that the time had come to quit India, they authorised every Prince and princeling in the six hundred odd States of India to decide for himself whether he would join India or Pakistan or become independent. That, however, was the position only on paper. In actual fact, the nationalist movement was as strong in the States as in British India, though it generally kept aloof from direct agitation in the States. The All-India States People's Conference, closely allied to the Indian National Congress, was strong enough to prevent the Balkanisation of India. Thus, in reality, the choice of the rulers was limited to opting for either India or Pakistan.

The ruling party in India, the Congress, stood for the liquidation of autocratic rule in the States—in fact the ultimate abolition of the Princely Order itself. The ruling party of Pakistan, the Muslim League, had assured the Princes that if they acceded to Pakistan, not only their privileges and titles but even their powers would be safeguarded.

The communal riots changed the entire picture. While in India the carnage was checked and the Governments at the centre and in the States dedicated themselves to the building of a secular state, assuring opportunities of advancement to all communities without discrimination on grounds of religion or caste, in Pakistan the killings ended in the western wing only with the virtual annihilation of the minority community. In East Pakistan, the killings were not on the same scale but the process of "squeezing out" the minorities continued. India would have to go a long way before she could claim to have achieved a casteless secular state, but there could be no doubt about her objective. In Pakistan, on the other hand, even if the minority community were to survive in the eastern wing, it could never aspire to equal rights with the majority community.

After the riots, it became evident to every ruler in the subcontinent, Hindu or Muslim, that whatever be the assurances held out by the League to the Princes, there was no chance of their being implemented. The Pakistan Government's failure to deal with the rioters firmly created in their minds an impression that it was really the mob which ruled in Pakistan. The ruling class played to its tune. No ruler could feel safe there unless he had an assurance that the mob was on his side. Rulers who felt themselves responsible for the safety and honour of both their Hindu and Muslim subjects hesitated to join Pakistan.

The Maharaja of Kashmir was also caught on the horns of another dilemma. The relations between him

and the leaders of the popular party were worse than it had been at any time before. The leaders of the National Conference were in jail when he was called upon to decide the future of the State. If he acceded to India, he would have to release these leaders, who had the full backing of the Congress. If he joined Pakistan, there was just a chance that the Pakistan Central Government would give him a free hand in internal matters. But accession to Pakistan was out of question.

Unable to choose between India and Pakistan, the Maharaja toyed with the third idea—independence. He felt that compared to other Princes, he was in a stronger position to take advantage of the British Government's declaration giving them freedom to do whatever they liked. He had a certain vantage position, certain political advantages which others lacked. Externally, if he was attacked by Pakistan, he could turn to India for help. If India exerted pressure on him, he could request Pakistan for aid. Internally, the National Conference which challenged his authority drew its strength almost entirely from the valley of Kashmir. The Buddhists of Ladakh were innocent of politics and ideas of responsible government. They only wanted to be left in peace so that they might worship at the lotus feet of the Master. Except for a handful of unimportant politicians, the Dogras of Jammu were solidly behind him.

One could only guess what the Maharaja must have thought. The fact was that he joined neither India nor

Pakistan but entered into a standstill agreement with the two countries as a temporary measure. Perhaps if that standstill agreement had been honoured by Pakistan, the Maharaja might have realised his dream of independence. In any event, the history of the State would have been different.

But Pakistan did not honour the standstill agreement. The ink was hardly dry on that document when the Pakistan Government began to violate its provisions one by one.

In undivided India, communications with Kashmir had mainly been through the territory that was now West Pakistan. There was a private road of the Maharaja running from Jammu to Srinagar, but it was not meant for heavy traffic.

Taking advantage of her geographical position, Pakistan tried to starve the State into submission. In violation of the standstill agreement, she cut off supplies of petrol to the State. She even stopped the flow of essential commodities like salt.

When the Maharaja still vacillated, they tried raids. Official records listed hundreds of raids between September 3, 1947 and the major invasion in October.

The two countries had attained independence only on August 15, 1947. Raids began on Kashmir within three weeks of the creation of Pakistan, which meant that the blueprint for the conquest of Kashmir must have been prepared by the leaders even before their State had been formally ushered in.

Many countries in the world had been guilty of aggression at some period or other. But there must be very few countries in the world which had embarked on it so early in its life. Babies were supposed to be innocent—though Freud had cast some doubts on it.

On September 3, 1947, in the words of the official documents, "at Kotha, 17 miles southeast of Jammu, armed raiders chased refugees and indulged in loot and murder. The raiders retreated into Pakistan territory when the Kashmir State garrison reached the scene. Another band of 300 raiders waylaid and murdered a Hindu refugee and his wife and abducted their two daughters near the village of Rajpura, ten miles south of Samba, and later attacked the village. A group of Pakistan nationals attacked Dohali on the Jammu-Pakistan border and lifted cattle. Yet another group, numbering about 500, armed with service rifles, chased refugees and attacked the State petrol reservoir at Chak Haria, six miles south of Samba."

There were raids day after day, and these were not confined to Jammu, where there was the "excuse" of communal riots. They extended to the peaceful Muslim majority areas of Kashmir. On September 9, 1947, for instance, "a convoy of Kashmir State subjects, escorted by Pakistani troops and coming from Rawalpindi, was expected at Kohala. It failed to arrive. Later on, information was available to show

that the convoy had been massacred *en route* to Kohala."

On October 3, 1947, "one hundred armed Pathans entered the Dhikote *thana* eight miles southeast of Kohala and, after taking possession of arms and ammunition, set fire to the police station. Three hundred armed raiders crossed the River Jhelum opposite Salian, two and a half miles southwest of Dhikote, at 11.30 a.m., and raided Dhikote again. Raiders were also seen crossing the river Jhelum at Baseen, four miles south of Kohala."

Next day, "an aeroplane flew over the river Jhelum from Kohala to Palandari and back. The object of the flight was probably reconnaissance."

Looking back, the Maharaja's continued faith in the standstill agreement seemed pathetic. But one could understand his hesitation even if one could not appreciate it. The only way for him to save his State was to join the large family of States of the Republic of India, but the moment he did so, his power was bound to pass into the hands of leaders of the "quit Kashmir" movement. So he continued hoping against hope that Pakistan would see the wisdom of leaving him alone.

With the invasion of the State by Pakistan and the State's accession to India, the Indian Army became responsible for the defence of the State. But just as the Maharaja had feared, power passed from Jammu to Srinagar. It was not easy for either the Maharaja or

his Dogra subjects to accept the new order. But the old order ever yields place to new, and Ram Singh was confident that in course of time, the Dogra would not only reconcile himself to the change but even come to realise that what had happened was not just a change-over from Dogra to Kashmiri rule but the dawn of democracy.

But that day of reconciliation seemed far off in the summer of 1948 when the refugees poured their tales of woe and complained against the alleged indifference of their new Government to their plight. The only thing that renewed man's hope in himself was faith, and as one glanced at the spires of the ancient temples of Jammu, they seemed to give out a golden glow of promise of a better tomorrow.

CHAPTER II

ONE FOR THE ROAD

Ram Singh's first visit to the frontline coincided with the Indian Army's drive to Rajauri in Jammu province.

It had not been easy to get permission to go there. He was told that there was only one man who could authorise him to occupy a seat in one of the numerous military vehicles that left Jammu for Naushera and proceeded from there to Rajauri. That man was "Jeewan."

But this "Jeewan" chap seemed to be a very mysterious individual, though everyone talked about him. When he called at the military headquarters and sent his visiting card to "Jeewan", he was told there that they had never heard of him.

Then "Jeewan" turned out to be G.I.—General Staff Officer No. 1, the principal staff officer to the commanding general who was generally not in Jammu. The military terminology confused a civilian until he broke through their technical jargon. The G.I had under him G.II and G.III.

The G.I proved quite helpful. He took Ram Singh to the A.Q., *i.e.* the officer in charge of supplies and transport and matters relating to general discipline.

The A.Q. put him in touch with a particular officer, who was to be his escort to Naushera.

One trouble with the services was that they always did things at odd hours. The officer who was to take him to Naushera, which was seventy miles from Jammu, wanted him to get ready by 3-30 a.m. The convoy, the officer warned him, would leave at "3-40 sharp," and if he missed it, he would not get a lift in any subsequent convoy without prior endorsement on his permit slip by G.I.

Ram Singh did not want to be searching for G.I. a second time, so he decided to dress up and be ready by 3 in order to be on the safe side of Army punctuality.

But the Army driver who was to pick him up was less than punctual—he did not turn up till 4-30 a.m. And when Ram Singh got into the vehicle rather perturbed by the delay, the driver remarked nonchalantly that they might be too early for the convoy. Ram Singh wondered whether the officer had said "3-30" by a slip of tongue. The driver laughed when he shared his thoughts with him. "This is nothing," said the driver. "You should be thankful that the officer did not ask you to be up by 2-30."

Ram Singh was rather mystified. The driver proceeded to explain these things to him. "Supposing the General Sahib wants to inspect a parade at 7 in the morning," said the driver, "he usually tells his adjutant about it. Now the adjutant wants no flap, so he tells the

A.Q. or G.I. 'Sir, the General is taking the salute probably at 6-30.' Now, the A.Q. is also a cautious man, so he makes it 6. By the time the order reaches the Subedar-Major, the time schedule will have been altered to 5. The Subedar-Major tells the N.C.O. that the parade is at 4-30. The poor Jawan is told that he should report on the parade ground at 4. It takes the Jawan about two hours to polish his shoes to parade ground standard and he has also to get his dress properly pressed. So he practically goes without sleep the whole night preparing for the parade. By the time General Sahib comes for inspection, everyone will have been half dead."

"Why can't everyone give out the correct time?" Ram Singh asked the driver. The loquacious representative of the Army Service Corps replied. "If you cut it too fine, someone may slip up and the whole unit will lose face. After all one does not report for parade every day and a little trouble one day will not ruin one's constitution."

Ram Singh liked the driver's conversation and wished to keep it up till they reached his escorting officer's residence. "Is it like that in every Army?" he asked the driver.

"I don't know," said the driver, "but they say it is so in all the best armies.' In any event, it was like that even in the time of the British."

"How do you justify the system?"

"You see, many things that we do in the Army will seem strange to civilians. But then the Army has to do things differently from the usual run of Government departments. If Army life and civilian life are the same, one can as well do without the Army."

Ram Singh was not quite convinced by the logic, but he said, "True enough. There is a story that when America introduced conscription in the last war, some of the new American recruits marched off the parade ground when they were given their first lesson as soldiers. You see the drill sergeant issued the usual instructions, 'left,' 'right,' 'left,' 'right,' 'about turn,' 'attention,' and that sort of thing. But after some time, some of the recruits were browned off. 'Sergeant,' one of them shouted, 'make up your mind whether it is 'left' or 'right.' It is no use our wasting time like this."

"The Americans do everything so differently from the British," said the driver. "They say second lieutenants in the American Army can borrow the General's jeep. I like American ice-cream but I prefer the British Army. The British do everything wisely. What they do appears stupid at first but later you see the wisdom behind it. For instance, I would never have been a driver but for a British recruiting officer. Two of us from our village near Ludhiana went to the recruiting depot together. My friend was a driver already; he was employed by a truck company. So he wanted to be a driver in the R.I.A.S.C., while I wanted to join the infantry. But the British officer told my friend, 'I am

afraid you know too much already about driving. You will not fit into the Army as a driver. You can join the infantry if you wish to.' And, to my surprise, he advised me to become a driver. 'You don't know the difference between steering wheel and the brake. So you will make a good pupil,' he said, and so it turned out to be."

By that time the vehicle had reached the escorting officer's bungalow. The officer was still in bed. The driver woke him up and he was ready in another twenty minutes. He muttered some sort of an apology to Ram Singh for being "a little late".

The convoy actually started at 6 o'clock. It was taking rations and some passengers. Among the passengers were some of the refugees who had fled from Rajauri in the early days of the war.

Ram Singh was rather annoyed with the escorting officer but he soon got along with him very well. He was very courteous and patient in answering the innumerable questions which Ram Singh kept asking on his first trip in an Army vehicle.

"I suppose we should be in Naushera by 10-30," said Ram Singh.

"The road is very bad," the officer replied, "and I am afraid we cannot go fast. We may consider ourselves lucky if we manage to reach Naushera by 6 p.m."

"But isn't the distance only seventy miles?" asked Ram Singh.

“Yes, but we are going in convoy on a bad road, and our average speed will be not more than six to eight miles an hour,” the officer said.

After the first hour, when progress was quite rapid, the convoy slowed down and Ram Singh had his first taste of Jammu dust. It was something which no one who had travelled on that road was likely to forget. It blotted out visibility more effectively than a dense fog. A thick layer of it formed on one's dress so that whatever might have been the original colour of the fabric, it became a dull khaki.

Khaki, after all, was derived from a Persian word meaning dust. It was said by some Army officers that during the operations of the British Army in Persia, a Red-coated British regiment found that the red uniforms were showing off and were a great help to sharpshooting Persian tribesmen in picking out their targets. The colonel of the regiment realised the danger in which his men were placed and immediately ordered them to take off their uniforms and drag them in the dust before putting them on again. That blotted out the red colour. Thus was khaki born. (Others said that this happened not in Persia but South Africa.) The olive green replaced the khaki in the Burma jungles because the camouflage effect of olive green was better. During the Kashmir operations the Indian Army stuck to olive green in brown hills as well as in green while Pakistani soldiers

who were captured were always found to be wearing only khaki.

With convoys going in both directions, the dust settled not only on one's clothes but all over the body. Ram Singh found that no passenger in the convoy had black hair any more. That was also dyed khaki. All had the same complexion, dark Madrasi drivers from the South and fair Dogra infantrymen. Dust got into one's lungs and everyone was coughing. Meanwhile the summer sun was getting hotter and hotter and beads of perspiration mingled with the dust to form an unpleasant coating of mud.

The Indian Army had inherited the British Army's indifference to food. The only change made in the Indian Army's food habits in the early years of independence was to withdraw a few items of exclusive British preference. Otherwise the canteens were stocked in the same way as before—Norwegian sardine, tinned carrots, dehydrated potatoes and items of that sort. *Puris* and *chappatis* were always freshly made. Sometimes one got fresh potatoes and onions. The whole thing was washed down with gallons of tea, prepared in kerosene tins, and poured into "all-purpose" mugs. Army tea had a special flavour. One cursed it when one drank it but one always returned to it. Officers who could get better tea from their own mess never missed a chance of gulping the Jawan's tea, which alone properly qualified for the term 'Army tea.' A sip of that brew, which was kept

boiling for a much longer period than the tea-tasters would approve of, gave the officers a mystic feeling of oneness with the Jawan.

The roads in Jammu had been built on soft earth. The hills of Jammu, unlike those of Kashmir, did not boast of hard rock. When it began to rain, the road became impassable. The wheels would just sink into the mud. At such times, it seemed to the drivers that the dust was infinitely preferable to mud. One almost began to love the dust.

The dust was not without its military value. While it rose high in the air and increased the chances of one vehicle bumping into another, it also protected them from snipers. The snipers had to shoot wildly. They could not see where the road was, let alone a vehicle.

The presence of enemy snipers in a locality had a psychological effect on the drivers and passengers. Some suddenly became silent. The normally silent ones talked too much. Some of the passengers showed a morbid preoccupation with death. Others displayed an unnatural optimism.

The convoy had been on the road for six hours. Yet it had traversed less than half the distance to Naushera in spite of the fact that the first stretch had been exceedingly good. Ram Singh was still hopeful of reaching Naushera before sunset and then covering the thirty mile run to Rajauri the same night. He ultimately made it in seven days.

The convoy was halted unexpectedly when it was discovered that the road ahead was mined. There were also some new snipers' nests to be cleared.

The officers in the convoy and Ram Singh spent the week with a piquet at Beri Pattan. The refugees were accommodated in the village. Officers and men did not normally share the same accommodation and eat in the same mess but the unexpected influx made that unavoidable. Beri Pattan was not a halting place and no arrangements existed there to receive guests. So whatever accommodation was available was shared equally. It was not due to any snobbishness that officers and Jawans were normally allotted separate quarters, and among the officers, those up to the rank of Major were given one mess and those above that rank were allotted a different mess. It was just a matter of mutual convenience. To the Jawan, for instance, food was entirely free. Basic rations were free for the officers too in the frontline, but they usually supplemented their diet at their own expense. Also, constant company tended to make both officer and Jawan a little uncomfortable. The Jawan was a bit stiff in the presence of the officer. The officer too had to behave in a "correct" manner in the presence of the Jawan. And the correct manner included avoidance of any jokes which would be regarded as "coarse." To some extent, the presence of Jawans among the officers had the same effect as the presence

of ladies in a company—it inhibited conversation of a certain kind.

Anyway, Ram Singh was very glad that he was straight away thrown among the Jawans; meeting them now and then would never have given him the feeling of kinship with the soldier which one could get only by direct contacts.

The more he watched the Jawan, the more he was filled with admiration for the spirit of the Army. How the Army managed to transcend regional loyalties and caste and religious differences would ever remain a mystery. The Army was a secular state in miniature. All recruits were turned into Jawans. No matter where they came from, they imbibed certain attitudes and outlook that had made the Indian Army one of the toughest and best fighting forces in the world. The same Jawans, when they returned to civil life, occasionally relapsed into their old shells and participated in village and caste feuds and antagonisms, *e.g.* as between the Jat and the 'bania'. He wondered what it was that made the stamp of the Army permanent in some cases and not in others.

At last the mines that had delayed his trip to Naushera were all cleared and the convoy resumed its journey.

A battle was on at Naushera when Ram Singh got there and reported to the field commander there. One of the many piquets guarding Naushera had been

surrounded that morning and the garrison at Naushera was organising its relief. Troops were concentrated in a well-concealed spot and the gunners were firing away like mad. Twentyfive-pound shells were whistling their way towards the enemy positions. Eight hundred shells were fired in a matter of hours before the relief column swung into action and broke the enemy ring.

Ram Singh loved the twentyfive-pounders. They were the Jawan's constant companion throughout the Jammu and Kashmir operations. In addition to the twentyfive-pounders, the Army was using many other weapons, *e.g.* the mountain gun which was far more effective than the twentyfive-pounder in the hills, and the mortar which was deadly accurate at close range. But the twentyfive-pounder made a more lasting impression on one than any other weapon. The Indian Army did not use heavy anti-aircraft guns or guns of a higher calibre than the twentyfive-pounder during the Kashmir operations, but the Pakistanis, in the heaviest bombardment of the war—5,000 shells in three days—threw everything they had at Naushera, including heavy ack-ack guns and medium guns.

There was nothing so frightening as the piercing wail of a shell when one heard it for the first time. But like any other danger, one got used to it. Ram Singh still blushed when he recalled his own instinctive reaction when the first Pakistani twentyfive-pound shell passed over the hutment where he had been provided

accommodation. It seemed to him that the shells were bound to hit the roof and when it caved in, he would be trapped. So he rushed out and spent the night in a bunker which seemed reasonably safe. But the second day he behaved quite normally and remained inside the hutment working as usual. When there was no let-up in the shelling, he became so indifferent that he took out a jeep and drove up to a piquet which was bearing the brunt of the enemy's fury. He was not shaken up even when, on his way back, pine trees hit by shells were crashing all over the place and one of them almost fell on his jeep.

While one undoubtedly risked one's life at the front, far greater risks were being run every day by some of the workers in civil occupations. They got no medals, they wore no uniforms and there was no glamour attached to their work. But their jobs deserved as much recognition as the soldier's. In the frontline the danger was confined to the brief periods of fighting. On the other hand, some of the building workers precariously perched on narrow platforms six storeys above the ground, lived dangerously every minute of their working life.

When one thought of it, soldiering was a profession like any other. Anyone who had good health could be made into a good soldier unless he was an absolute coward. Fortunately for India, every part of the country could provide first rate human material for the Army. Recruits could be taken not only from the

“martial” races but every one of the so-called “non-martial” communities. The Second World War and the Kashmir war had exploded the myth of “martial” and “non-martial” races. Some of those who had fought for Pakistan used to jeer at the *dhotiwallahs*, as if there was a special merit in a pyjama or a pair of trousers which the *dhoti* lacked. But when a *dhotiwallah* put on a uniform, he made as good a soldier as any other. Soldiering, Ram Singh was convinced, had nothing to do with one’s caste or religion or food or drink habits. It was strange how the myth had taken root at all, considering the fact that some of the greatest heroes of the Mahabharat war were Brahmins who were supposed to be “non-martial”. There were many tough Jats from Rohtak in the Indian Army who were strict vegetarians. The simple *chappati* and *dal* and milk and vegetables gave them the same stamina which others derived from a combination of vegetable and animal food. Some of the best officers of the Indian Army did not believe in prohibition. Others, who fought equally well, did not touch alcohol.

At Naushera, Ram Singh met Brigadier Usman, who was not only a successful commander in battle but something much more—a symbol of the secular state for which the Indian Army was fighting in Kashmir. When Usman’s brilliant military career was prematurely cut short by a stray enemy shell at Jhangar, he joined the ranks of the select few whose memory would ever keep alive the flame of a lofty cause lit by the founding fathers of the nation.

Usman was one of the few senior Muslim officers from Northern India who opted for India on partition. In the ideological confusion wrought by the partition, even the Army had not escaped the infection of the communal poison which had made so many Muslim leaders in India fight for the division of their motherland.

Usman's faith in Gandhiji and the secular ideology was profound. Such was Gandhiji's influence on him that he kept a *charkha* with him at his battle headquarters.

He talked to Ram Singh not about the famous Naushera battle which he had won but about orphan boys and girls, Muslim and Hindu, which the officers of his parachute brigade had picked up around Naushera and put to school. Usman realised that for India, the war was comparatively unimportant. What mattered more was the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity.

One could not understand the nature of the Kashmir war without appreciating the big contribution made by Brigadier Usman towards recapturing the old spirit of the Army. The partition had undermined the discipline of the Army. It was not evident on the surface but the danger was a very real one. British officers charged with the task of putting down communal rioting just before the partition complained that they could no longer rely on the troops which had served them so loyally in two world wars.

"If you ask Hindu troops to fire on Muslim crowds," said a senior British officer, "they do so with gusto and the casualties are terrible. If you ask them to fire on their own co-religionists, they fire all right—you could not charge them with disobedience of orders—but the bullets pass over the heads of the rioters. It is the same with Muslim troops and with the Sikhs. Only mixed units are of any use these days."

Usman set about repairing the damage to Army discipline and to the cause of nationalism by the force of his example. He succeeded in remarkably quick time. This convinced the waverers that given the right leadership, the Indian Army could be restored to its pristine glory.

When Usman first came to Naushera, there were some among the Hindu and Sikh officers who wondered whether it was safe to entrust such a key sector to a Muslim. These doubters were subsequently to be the staunchest of Usman's lieutenants.

The battle of Naushera which Usman won on February 6, 1948 had both a military and a political significance. Militarily, it was the most spectacular victory to be scored by the Indian Army since independence. It was estimated that out of the 15,000 hostiles who attacked Naushera in three waves in that fateful battle, about 2,000 were killed. Nine hundred and fortytwo bodies were actually counted. The booty captured was equally impressive and included a number

of Bren guns, Sten guns and rifles. This tremendous victory was won at a cost to the Indian Army of 29 soldiers killed and 90 wounded. Politically, the fact that the officer who led the Indian Army to victory happened to be a Muslim restored perspectives which had been lost in the communal carnage in the wake of the partition.

Pakistan understood full well the danger of the Usman legend to her own cause. The Indian Army captured pamphlets, cyclostyled sheets and letters emanating from Pakistan, which "warned" the local inhabitants that Brigadier Mohammed Usman was really a Hindu who had assumed a Muslim name to create confusion among them.

The Pakistanis put a prize on Usman's head. When ultimately Pakistani gunners "got" him, there was great joy in the Pakistani camp and it was announced from Pakistan that the gun crew had been "suitably rewarded".

But guns and bullets had never yet succeeded in killing ideas. When Jesus was crucified, the Jewish fanatics had thought that they were getting rid of the man who menaced their customs and beliefs and way of life. But the cross became the triumphant symbol of Christianity.

When Gandhiji died at the hands of the assassin, his martyrdom rallied his countrymen to the cause for

which he had died—the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Far from lessening his influence, his removal from the scene made him one of the “immortals”.

Similarly, Usman's death served to bring into bold relief the fact that the battle in Jammu and Kashmir was not a battle for “a cabbage patch”. Of course India had gone to Kashmir to throw out the aggressor, but that was not all : at stake was the very integrity of India, which was founded on the principle that every citizen had the right to follow the religion of his choice as opposed to the two-nation theory of the Muslim League. Even without Kashmir, India would remain the second most populous country in the world and she would not lose her importance in that sense. But Kashmir had become a symbol of her secular state, and defeat there would undermine the entire edifice of Indian democracy.

CHAPTER III

RAJAURI SHAMBLES

As he left Naushera for Rajauri, Ram Singh thought of the thousands of Pathans who had died there fighting a battle which was not theirs. They were being used as cat's-paw in the name of *jehad* or holy war.

The Pathans had always given trouble to the British. The British kept them quiet by bribing the tribal *maliks*. When bribes failed, they suppressed the tribesmen by force. In the role cast for the Pathans, in Kashmir by the inspirers of *jehad*, Pakistan stood to benefit whether the Pathans won or lost. It was a case of, "Heads I win, tails you lose". If they won, the territory would belong to Pakistan. If on the other hand they got slaughtered in the process, the tribal area would be quiet till the new generation grew up to take up the feuds of their fathers. Ram Singh felt sorry for the Pathans. They were brave and courageous but they could easily be misled.

The operations to liberate Rajauri were launched on April 8, 1948. The thirty-mile advance was carried out in difficult, wooded country.

As one got farther and farther away from Naushera, the climate improved. Rajauri was cooler than

Naushera. There were thick forests of pine along most of the route. The Tawi murmured gently as Ram Singh's jeep crawled along the new road. The road blocks put up by the enemy by felling the pine had just been removed but the fragrance of the cut pine lingered in the air.

He wondered where this particular Tawi originated. In Jammu, all rivers were Tawis. The only exception was the Chenab. One recognised a river not by its name but by the particular town through which it passed. Thus the big river in Jammu was "Jammu Tawi". The smaller river which ran through Naushera was "Naushera Tawi". He would have to cross "Rajauri Tawi" in order to enter Rajauri.

He was now travelling along the old Moghul route to Kashmir. The local guides showed him rest houses where the Emperors used to stay with their Begums and courtiers. Of course one could never be too sure that they did stay in those particular houses. But then such legends added to the local colour and it was better not to make life dull by probing into these matters. Glamour was always skin deep. That sort of thing happened in all countries. It contributed to the tourist interest. It was said that in Denmark, tourists were fond of seeing the stream in which Ophelia was supposed to have committed suicide. It must have been a great feat indeed if she had come out of the pages of *Hamlet* and drowned herself there, for the

water in the stream was never more than knee-deep. Ophelia must have been a woman of tremendous will power.

He felt a bit irreverent as he carefully examined the houses where the Begums of the Moghul court were supposed to have stayed. Any ordinary middle class woman commanded more luxuries in the present age than the Emperors' ladies a few centuries ago. Of course the Empresses had at their disposal camels and elephants and horses and footmen and clothes of silver and gold, but not the modern amenities of life like electric fans and radio—or for that matter proper plumbing.

The officer who commanded the troops in the Rajauri operation almost lost his life. He was inspecting one of the hills which was believed to have been cleared of the enemy when someone fired at him. Thinking that he was being fired at by his own men by mistake, the officer shouted at the top of his voice, *Apne admihain*. He was answered by a volley of light machine-gun fire. Now he understood the danger in which he was in and jumped into a ditch. He got away with a slight limp.

The enemy tried repeatedly to stage a come-back. But in every major effort he was soundly beaten. However, there was sporadic activity in the area for weeks after it had been declared safe.

The Rajauri Tawi, which the vehicles had to cross, was very undependable. The water level rose

frequently and this interfered badly with regular communication. There had been some boats there before, but they had all been destroyed.

It was dark when Ram Singh's convoy, carrying the refugees brought all the way from Jammu, began crossing the river. When the vehicles were in the middle of the river, shots rang out—enemy shots. In the stillness of the night the report of the rifle conveyed a sense of danger to a much greater extent than during day time.

In the frontline, one usually ignored rifle shots and even the shells. What was regarded as most dangerous was the dull thud of the three-inch mortar bomb. But that night the rifle bullets came thick. The tracer bullets formed different patterns.

The convoy was caught in a pretty bad posture right in the middle of the river. The drivers switched off the lights while the Indian Army piquets on the farside of the bank returned the fire. The engagement lasted nearly an hour while the passengers waited tensely in the lorries. When quiet was restored, the engines refused to start. The drivers thought it wise not to switch on the lights and try to see what had gone wrong but to leave the vehicles there for the night. The passengers were accordingly ordered to get out of the vehicles and reach the safety of the bank.

Among those groping their way towards the bank was a Swiss Red Cross representative. He had come

by plane the previous evening from Jammu to Naushera and had joined the Rajauri convoy. His mission was to find out whether there was any truth in vague rumours that were floating about, about enemy atrocities in Rajauri. Ram Singh had heard these rumours too. But his experience as a journalist made him distrust rumours. Only occasionally had rumour some basis in fact. One had only to go to a police court to realise how honest, sensible, responsible people were capable of giving conflicting versions of the same incident and exaggerating things. One had to be particularly careful about atrocity stories. Those who narrated them usually suffered from an emotional stress which made them very poor witnesses. So while the Swiss gentleman was going to Rajauri with an absolutely open mind, Ram Singh was, if anything, in a sceptical frame of mind.

Meanwhile, it began to rain. It meant that they were being denied even starlight. Ram Singh caught a few glow worms hiding under bushes. He wondered whether they would constitute some sort of a torch if he put them in a bottle. But he had no bottle and he had to release them without carrying out the experiment.

The rain made the bank very slippery. Every member of the party was cold and wet by the time they reached the Army camp. The luggage had to be left behind in the lorries that were stranded in the river and they would have to spend the night in their wet clothes. The shoes were muddy.

But the Army's hospitality at Rajauri was warm, though it was nearly 2 a.m. when they got there. The Swiss doctor and Ram Singh were taken charge of by a young officer who had just been promoted. They talked and talked and it was nearly 4-30 when they went to bed—or rather attempted to sleep on bare cots.

The morning was as bleak as the evening. The lorries, Ram Singh learnt, were going to arrive only in the afternoon, and this meant that all the passengers would remain bedrabbled the whole day. It was strange they were worrying about their appearance when their minds were full of the alleged enemy atrocities.

The colonel confirmed the atrocity stories when he arrived at their quarters shortly after breakfast. He was leaning on a walking stick and had brought some sticks for the party which was to proceed to the scene of the atrocities. The colonel explained that the route was so slippery that without the sticks it would be difficult for them to maintain their balance.

The colonel said that when his unit entered Rajauri, he had expected a warm welcome from the local population. But when they entered the town, they were greeted with an ominous silence—the silence of the dead and dying. When it became evident to the hostiles that the Indian Army's advance to Rajauri could not be checked, they put the local population to the sword. "You will see the evidence for yourself," said the colonel. "I don't want to prejudice your mind."

Ram Singh felt that the colonel should have been in the judiciary or the diplomatic service. He spoke slowly and precisely and had imbibed from Sandhurst the British virtue of under-statement. Ram Singh wondered what the colonel would show them. He still believed that things could not be as bad as the colonel was trying to make out.

They first went round the town. Rajauri had been a prosperous town. The buildings had been of solid stone. But now very few buildings remained intact. The streets were full of rubble.

Slowly, the colonel unfolded before Ram Singh and the International Red Cross representative, the story of Rajauri. "It appears they started the demolitions when we reached Chingas, half-way between Naushera and Rajauri," said the colonel. "You see some of the stones are black. They tried to burn these buildings down. But they were too solidly built. So they seem to have brought spades and pick-axes and proceeded about it systematically."

In another building, which was still standing, there were some earthen pots and pans, some *chappatis* and kneaded dough. "We must have arrived before they expected us," said the colonel. "Perhaps if they had had more time, not a single building would have been left here."

They proceeded from there towards the open fields. Rajauri's rice fields were famous throughout

the State. But the "rice bowl" was empty now. Weeds grew where crops should have been ready for a golden harvest.

The shoes sank in the mud. Someone slipped. He might have fallen into a ditch if a junior officer had not caught him.

They stopped in the middle of a field. The colonel pointed to the centre of the field and remained silent.

Ram Singh saw nothing there at first, but, after staring at the patch for a couple of minutes, he noticed some pieces of bone—human bone. The colonel broke the oppressive silence. "This is a mass grave. There are two or three more," said the colonel.

Ram Singh wanted to make sure. "How do you know it is a mass grave," Ram Singh asked timidly. He was still a little bit sceptical. Perhaps it was just an ordinary burial ground. The implications of a "mass grave" would be terrible. True, people didn't bury their dead normally in the middle of a rice field. Still, it was better not to jump to conclusions.

The colonel did not reply to him directly. But he ordered a Jawan to start digging. Within two minutes the whole area was filled with an insufferable stench. Everyone was relieved when the colonel shouted, "Enough". He turned to Ram Singh and said, "I would have opened it up for you but I don't want an epidemic among my troops."

Ram Singh felt that though the colonel was addressing him, the colonel's remarks were meant not

so much for him as for the Red Cross representative. The Swiss gentleman had been silent all this time. But he had been watching everything intently. "It is a freshly dug grave, a mass grave. There can be no doubt about it," he pronounced.

They saw the other graves. Three graves, each fifty square yards in area and believed to be fifteen feet deep, stared them in the face. The information about the depth of the pits was furnished by the handful of people who had survived the ordeal. It appeared that the hostiles, before retreating, had made the intended victims dig their own graves. A few had somehow managed to escape after digging them.

As Ram Singh moved from one grave to another, he saw ladies' sandals and chappals, blood-stained clothes of little children, combs and knick-knacks. In one spot there were some broken bangles—an indication that some of the women had put up a struggle.

"My patrols are daily reporting the discovery of more corpses," said the colonel in a matter-of-fact voice, "Apparently they had no time to bury them."

The survivors were housed in an old building. Many of them had ugly wounds on their bodies. A child's head was badly burnt. It seemed that they had flung the child into a burning building. It had survived somehow while everyone else inside the building had perished.

A school mistress had multiple injuries. It appeared that after attacking her with sharp-edged weapons, they took her for dead and flung her amid a heap of corpses. But she recovered consciousness and managed to creep away before the dead were flung into one of the graves.

The Red Cross representative took pictures of the injured.

They saw one of the smaller graves before returning to their lodgings. That grave made an even greater impression on Ram Singh than the mass graves. Right in the middle of that grave was the hand of a little child, sticking out a few inches above the ground. It seemed to cry out to the heavens for justice.

The refugees said that the hostiles had done the killings mostly with swords and hatchets. They apparently did not want to waste their bullets. They did not have any shortage of bullets. They had left behind heaps of ammunition.

This was the second massacre that had been carried out in Rajauri. There had been one earlier—when the town first fell to the raiders. In the early killings only Hindus and Sikhs were slaughtered. In the second, the victims included those who had been forcibly converted to Islām after the fall of the town.

Imagination reeled at the magnitude of the crime. Ram Singh had witnessed the worst communal killings

of the partition but what had happened at Rajauri was "worse than the worst".

The colonel seemed to take things calmly but Ram Singh sensed that behind that cool exterior was a cold hatred, an anger that would not be easy to quench. Not only the colonel but all the officers and Jawans who had taken part in the liberation of Rajauri were powerfully affected by what they saw and heard.

Ram Singh wondered how any other army in the world would have behaved under the stress of a similar emotion. Would it not have retaliated at least against the prisoners who had been taken from among the criminals? Anyway, whatever other armies might or might not have done, the Indian Army fed its prisoners at Rajauri on the finest rice that Jammu could grow—better rice than was available at that time to the citizens of the Union capital.

Perhaps the discipline that held under such trying circumstances was as much a tribute to the Indian troops as to their commanders. Foremost among them was a man whose faith in the cause for which he fought was as deep as his religion. Not many would have been attracted to the ideology of Gandhiji and the hermitage of Sivananda at Rishikesh after one's Sandhurst training, but then Brigadier Yadunath Singh was no ordinary soldier. So long as men like him and Usman were in positions of command, there was no danger of angry

soldiers violating the stern laws of the secular state against revenge and retaliation.

Ram Singh asked himself how the Father of the Nation would have reacted had he been alive and visited Rajauri immediately after its liberation. Perhaps he would have stood in the middle of those rice fields and prayed hard for the dead, and harder still to save the souls of the men who had perpetrated the ghastly crime.

Men were often led to commit crime in war, which was not surprising because, after all, war itself was the biggest crime. But the atrocities were usually committed either as a retaliation for something or in the first flush of victory. At Rajauri it was just cold-blooded murder. Rajauri brought a new dimension to the Kashmir war. It was a warning to the Indian Army not to delay the process of liberation. If it took too long, there would be nothing left to liberate. The fanatics it faced did not believe in the sanctity of life or the values of civilization.

Of course, that lesson had already been taught at Baramula. But for what happened at Baramula, somehow the blame was passed on mainly to the tribals. No such alibi could be offered for Rajauri. In Rajauri at the time of the massacre there were not many tribals. There were the "locals," of course, but these "locals" were under the complete control of the Pakistan authorities. Pakistan would have to accept the responsibility for Rajauri squarely. The brutalities at Rajauri could not be weakly explained away like Baramula, as the orgies of a victor.

Rajauri reminded one of Lidice, a little Czechoslovak village which was completely wiped out in order to teach the Czech not to rebel against the "superior race". Had the enemy at Rajauri possessed the Nazis' scientific knowledge, he would not have hesitated to set up gas chambers.

Ram Singh found the officers at Rajauri baffled by the fact that the atrocities at Rajauri got much less publicity abroad than Baramula, though, in the opinion of all competent observers, Rajauri put Baramula in the shade. Perhaps, Ram Singh argued, that was due to the fact that while it was easy for correspondents to drive up to Baramula, which lay astride the main road, Rajauri was comparatively inaccessible. Secondly, while at Rajauri the victims were all unknown Indians, the victims at Baramula had included prominent National Conference workers and foreigners. The raiders also perpetrated at Baramula vandalism of a kind that was bound to attract international notice. They had sacked the Presentation Convent at Baramula, murdered the Assistant Mother Superior, Sister Teresaline, a Spaniard, and wounded the Mother Superior. The holy images in the chapel were desecrated. A former British officer of the Indian Army was shot dead and his wife's naked body was found in a well. The invaders had also raided the hospital attached to the convent and killed a nurse and two patients. They smashed up the crosses covering the graves in the Christian cemetery at Baramula.

The time factor was also important. The Baramula atrocities had occurred when the invasion was still in the headlines of the world press. Correspondents competed with each other in giving as many details about it as possible. Many of the correspondents from abroad who "covered" Baramula honestly believed that the partition of India had been on a religious basis, and that by accepting the accession of Kashmir, India was denying to Pakistan something that Pakistan could claim as her "legitimate due". They were also mentally prepared to see some evidence of atrocities against Hindus in Baramula because, after all, there had been communal rioting in both India and Pakistan. But what they found at Baramula was something totally different. It went against all their pre-conceived notions. They found the Muslims of Kashmir up in arms against Pakistan. They learnt that at Baramula, not only Hindus and Sikhs but large numbers of Muslims were slaughtered by those who had come in the name of *jehad*. And the victims of their bestialities included not only Muslims but also Europeans, and missionaries at that. Therefore the despatches that the correspondents sent about Baramula had been written under a deep sense of shock and created a powerful impression in the minds of their readers. Naturally, Christian communities in the West were greatly agitated when nuns were killed and crosses were broken. All communities in the world reacted emotionally to atrocities against their co-religionists and against men of their race. Ram Singh had

seen for himself how wild Hindu crowds could become when they heard about Hindus being killed in Pakistan and how excited Muslims could become when they heard that someone had insulted their religion.

Ram Singh felt that it would be easy enough to blame the Western press for not having taken much notice of Rajauri, but then similar charges could be levelled against the Indian press by people of other races. In the Middle East, for instance, he found Arabs complaining that the Indian press was not taking note of the atrocities committed by the Jews against the Arabs. And the Jews complained that the Indian press had a bias against them in their struggle against the Arabs. In any event, how many Indians were agitated by the charges and counter-charges of Arab against Jew and Jew against Arab? Once the human mind had reached "saturation point" in regard to atrocities, it just refused to be shocked any longer. And it was undeniable that the Rajauri killings, despite the gruesome manner in which they had been carried out, followed the familiar Hindu-*versus*-Muslim pattern with which the world was heartily sick.

But while the world at large might forget Rajauri and perhaps also Baramula, he, being an Indian, could not. He and millions of his fellow-countrymen, would remember the men, women and children who perished in Pakistan's *jehad*. When people abroad talked casually about the advisability of India "handing over"

the State to Pakistan, they would recall how hundreds had been butchered at Rajauri for the sole crime of not having been born to parents who professed the same religion as that of the invaders. And when foreigners argued that Kashmir "belonged" to Pakistan because it was "Muslim," they would not forget that among those killed at Baramula was Mohammed Maqbool Sherwani who denied the two-nation theory.

CHAPTER IV

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF RETALIATION

Ram Singh was held up at Rajauri for a few days. He had hoped to rush back to Jammu after a quick look round Rajauri to file news despatches, but the "Rajauri Tawi" was in spate and all that he could do was to wait for the flood to subside.

He spent the time discussing with the refugees and others the happenings in Rajauri. The arguments and discussions centred round one thing: could the Rajauri massacre have been avoided? If so how?

There were many who averred that India's "soft" policy should be blamed for what the enemy did at Rajauri. "If the enemy had any fear that we would retaliate," said a teacher who had lost his wife and two children in riots in Pakistan, "he would not have dared to touch a single hair of the citizens of Rajauri. The whole trouble is that our leaders are too idealistic."

The teacher continued, "I have had practical experience of the Pakistanis. My brother was with the Army and was posted to one of the units on the Amritsar border immediately after the partition. The unit noticed that on our side of the border, the land was lying fallow. On the Pakistani side of the border, the land was ploughed right up to the boundary line. Our peasants were afraid

to come too near the border because of fear of raids from Pakistan. These raids caused no stir in Delhi because the casualties were not many and usually only some cattle were lost. But our peasants there lived in constant terror of the Pakistanis. Then one of the senior officers had a bright idea : why not arm the peasants ? He did—of course, without consulting Delhi—and in a few days they began answering raid with raid. Then the Pakistani police came over and arranged a truce. After that there was no more trouble and the land on our side of the border was as green as on the other side.”

Ram Singh had many an argument with that teacher and a friend of the teacher, a local lawyer. “How do you apply your brother’s Amritsar experience to Rajauri ?” he asked the teacher.

Teacher : “It may sound barbarous but we are dealing with barbarians. The only language they understand is the language of force and retaliation.”

Ram Singh : “When you say ‘retaliation,’ do you mean to suggest that for every one of our nationals killed by the Pakistanis; say, at Baramula, we should have killed an equal number of Pakistanis and in that event, Rajauri would not have happened ? Let us be frank.”

Teacher : “Well, I shall be brutally frank. I say that for every Hindu or Sikh they killed in Pakistan, we should have killed a Muslim in India. For every Indian they killed on Indian soil, we should have killed

a Pakistani on Pakistani soil. For every raid they made across the border, we should have made a counter-raid”.

Ram Singh : That is nothing new. But let us be practical. Take your very first proposition. Now, the Pakistanis killed not only Hindus and Sikhs but also Muslims at Baramula. Do we then raid Pakistan and kill a large number of Hindus and Sikhs in addition to Muslims living in Pakistan? And then they killed English and Spanish nationals, including a Sister, on our territory. Do we go to Pakistan and kill an equal number of English and Spanish nationals living in Pakistan, for whose safety the Pakistan Government is answerable? The raiders raped Muslim women as well as Hindu and Sikh women at Baramula. How do we avenge the insult to their honour?”

Teacher : “Of course you can reduce any argument to an absurdity. But how do you think the communal riots in Pakistan stopped after the partition? Was it due to your logic and reasoning or all this tall talk of non-violence?”

Ram Singh : “I suppose your point is that when Muslims in Pakistan found that their co-religionists were being killed in India as a measure of retaliation, they stopped the slaughter.”

Teacher : “You have caught my point all right. Do you agree with it?”

Ram Singh : “I don’t agree with you. I think both in India and Pakistan the madness passed and

sanity returned to the people. The communal riots, if they exposed the madness in us, also brought out the brighter side of life. You go to any town in India or Pakistan where there was rioting, and you will come across instances where Hindus protected Muslims and Muslims protected Hindus at great risk to themselves."

The lawyer joined in the argument to remark that while the teacher was talking of the psychology of the mob, Ram Singh was concentrating on the individual.

Ram Singh : "I am also thinking of the crowds. I have often wondered how crowds can be so easily excited. I suppose the normal instincts and decencies break down in a crisis and then the *goonda* element, which is always there in any society but which in a well-ordered society is kept under control, emerges into the open and takes over. When the *goondaism* takes on a communal garb, for a time the normally law-abiding citizen who belongs to the same community as that of the *goonda* not only does not resist the *goondaism* but even gives it his moral support. When the ordinary citizen feels that things have gone too far, he withdraws that moral support from the *goonda* and from that moment onwards, the forces of law and order begin to regain the upper hand."

Teacher : "If you had been a refugee, you would not be talking with such a detached air."

Ram Singh : "That does not take us very far. It is a fact that the majority of the people of India and

Pakistan are non-refugees. But I reject your suggestion that the refugees are more communal-minded than non-refugees. You did not use the word 'communal' but that is the sense of what you say. The refugees who came to India, it is true, were both dazed and bitter. The bitterness was perfectly understandable. But they responded very well to the human touch. I remember when the Parliament Street police station compound was filled with the dead and dying, collected by squads of policemen and public-spirited citizens from the roadside, right behind the police station, members of all communities, refugees and non-refugees, were living peacefully in the Y.M.C.A. The Y.M.C.A. spirit helped the refugees staying there to forget and forgive. And when self-defence squads were formed by the old residents to guard the building against the rioters, the refugees joined them wholeheartedly. Elsewhere, I knew refugees who joined the rioters in a different environment."

Teacher : "At the most you can say that while our secular state needs Muslims in order to remain secular, the Islamic State of Pakistan becomes stronger if the minorities are wiped out. But the point is : is the secular state worth preserving at the cost of the minorities in Pakistan ? What is the remedy if you rule out retaliation ?"

Ram Singh : "We are not being exactly non-violent when we send our twentyfive pounders crashing around the enemy bunkers here. If you call that

retaliation, I have no objection at all. What I dislike is the theory of retaliation in the sense of treating the minority communities in both countries as hostages."

Teacher : "Who was responsible for such a situation ? That was inevitable when the country was divided."

Ram Singh : "It is not a question of principle alone. Let us agree for the sake of argument that the "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" approach is the correct one. But how do you apply it in practice ? Supposing the Government of India hears that fifty Hindus have been killed in Pakistan, how do you choose the fifty Muslim "hostages" in India on whom you are supposed to wreak vengeance ? Do you compile a national register of all Muslims and then draw lots for the sacrifice ? Something of that sort might have happened when man was still in a primitive stage. But the civilized conscience of man will not permit that now."

The lawyer remarked that it was this kind of "woolly sentimentality" that made the Congress take the word of the Muslim League that the minorities would receive fair treatment in Pakistan. "Thank God not every Congressman accepted the *bona fides* of the League. If the 'idealists' in the Congress had had their way, the whole of the Punjab and the whole of Bengal would have gone to Pakistan. Delhi would have been the Pakistan border, not Amritsar. And we would have lost not only Lahore but also Calcutta."

“If the Muslim League had really lived up to its promise to protect the minorities,” Ram Singh replied, “perhaps many Hindu and Sikh Princes might have acceded to Pakistan and Pakistan would have been a much richer and bigger country by now—perhaps so big that the rest of India would also have thought it worthwhile to join it, in which case, of course, we would have got a united India again.”

Ram Singh continued, “I am being not only practical but even opportunistic when I rule out the crude principle of retaliation. Your mind is filled with the wrongs done to the Hindus and Sikhs by the Muslims in Pakistan. Let us see where we ourselves stand, we non-Muslims not only in relation to the Muslim community but to one another. Assuming that the partition riots here were retaliatory, what about the troubles between caste Hindus and Harijans? In some parts of Northern India, even now Harijan bridegrooms are not allowed to ride horses. Harijan women are not permitted to wear gold ornaments; they have to be satisfied with ornaments made of baser metal. In some parts of India, they cannot “pollute” the Brahmin by coming near him. You will concede that if Hindus as such have a right to retaliate against their Muslim fellow-citizens for crimes committed against their co-religionists in a neighbouring State, similar “claims” will be advanced on behalf of the Harijans in the domestic sphere. Then there are the *adibasis* one of whose spokesmen told Parliament

recently that all the land in India belonged to the *adibasis* and not to the 'usurping' caste Hindus or Harijans. If each community tries to settle its historical scores with the other, where is India? At some stage we have to throw out the muck of history and settle down to a clean and ordered way of life. Why should the present and future generations have to be oppressed by what their ancestors did to each other? The ancestors are dead and, as they say, death pays all scores. We have shown that we have the capacity to forget and forgive on an international level by choosing to remain in the Commonwealth. All that I am asking is for the extension of that principle at the national level."

These conversations were anything but pleasant. But it seemed to Ram Singh that some driving power compelled them to resume the topic even after they had temporarily managed to drop it in favour of something less controversial. A gifted Russian writer had written a short story about some hungry men stranded on an island. They were getting hungrier and hungrier but no food was in sight. So they tried to forget the gnawing pangs of hunger by talking about politics, literature, art and music. But no matter what they did, the arguments ended up in renewed demands for food. Similarly, the partition and its aftermath had destroyed all accepted political values, and the soul of the sensitive Indian was hungry for an ideology that would enable him to meet the crisis. That basic need had to be met.

The lawyer told Ram Singh one day, "You talk of a secular state but was it not understood that Pakistan was the homeland for the Muslims? Who created Pakistan? The Muslims in Pakistan played a comparatively minor role in bringing about the partition. It was the Muslim in Bombay, the Muslim in Uttar Pradesh and the Muslim in Madras who fought for it. Now that they have got their homeland and they find that it is not of much use to them, it is all right for the Muslims to ask for a secular state. Why should the Hindus oblige?"

Ram Singh replied that he supported a secular state not because it was good for Muslims but because it was good for all communities alike. "The majority of the Muslims in the areas that are now in India did act foolishly when they asked for Pakistan," said Ram Singh "but they did so in a certain atmosphere. The joint electorate system would have prevented them from thinking only of their particular community but they operated under a system of separate electorates. It does not matter who asked for it and why it was agreed to by the British Government....."

The lawyer interrupted him to say that the Hindus remained loyal to the Congress despite separate electorates and the Muslims ought to have done the same without asking for a separate homeland.

Ram Singh : "Indian Muslims are not alone in having demanded a 'homeland' for themselves. The Jews did the same and got it. Israel was created not so much due to the efforts of the Jews in Palestine as to

those who held positions of power and influence in England, in the United States and other highly advanced countries. Indian Muslims actually never pronounced Pakistan to be the homeland for all Indian Muslims in the subcontinent the way the Jews looked upon Israel. But even after the creation of Israel, there are Jews living in London and New York. Would the United States Government or Her Majesty's Government be justified in expelling the Jews who have been loyal citizens of the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom respectively now that they have a homeland ?”

Lawyer : “Your comparison is slightly defective. The Jews established their homeland on Arab territory. How would the United States Government have treated American Jews if they had carved out a homeland not in Palestine but in New York ? How would the British Government have treated British Jews if they had barricaded themselves in Trafalgar Square or Whitehall and carved out a tiny independent State for themselves ?”

Ram Singh : “I am one with you that the partition was morally wrong. We ought to have resisted the partition regardless of the cost. Gandhiji was the first to realise in injustice of the partition. He opposed the dismemberment of India but the majority of his disciples got cold feet and refused to back him. But it is no use blaming only the Congress leaders. None of us who calls himself an Indian citizen can plead innocence. What did we who did not belong to the Congress do about the partition ?”

Lawyer : "What could we have done ?"

Ram Singh : "We could at least have written letters to the editor supporting Gandhiji's stand. That would not have changed the course of history but had we done so, we could at least have said proudly that we made a gesture. Anyway, Pakistan is now a settled fact and it is no use crying over spilt milk. But we can and we shall prevent further disasters. Isn't that why we are here in this State with a Muslim majority ?"

Lawyer : "Do you think you can stay here ?"

Ram Singh : "Why not ?"

Lawyer : "You could have avoided partition but partition came because of the pusillanimity of the leaders. The same leaders are in charge now. The question is whether they will again try to appease Pakistan."

Ram Singh : "In a democracy, the leaders are as strong as the people. The supreme leader, Gandhiji, was against the partition but the people were prepared to pay the price and he became a voice in the wilderness. If the people are prepared to surrender Kashmir, the leaders can do nothing. If, on the other hand, the people insist that we should see this thing through, the leaders have to abide by their mandate."

Lawyer : "Has it struck you that the same urge that drives India to defend the secular state in Kashmir is pushing Pakistan in the opposite direction ? What keeps together the western and eastern wings of

Pakistan, separated by one thousand miles of Indian territory and so different from each other in language, race and culture, if not the common bond of Islam? And if Kashmir, a Muslim majority area, remains apart from Pakistan, how will the Pakistan authorities justify the character of their State to their people?"

Ram Singh: "That makes it all the more necessary for us not to take any risks. In any event, Pakistan will have to make peace with reality, and that will require the giving up of her present ideology. After all, Pakistan has still millions of Hindus in its eastern wing and there are also Christians and Anglo-Indians who will not fit into the theocratic state permanently. So by standing firm on Kashmir, we are serving not only India but also the long-term interests of the people of Pakistan, just as by fighting for India's freedom we also contributed to the birth of independent Pakistan."

"Say it in Karachi," said the lawyer with ill-concealed sarcasm.

Ram Singh remembered this conversation when, years later, he visited the Netherlands. If God made the world, it was the Dutch who made the Netherlands. It was no idle boast; they had literally reclaimed a huge chunk of their territory from the sea. It was difficult to believe that the flourishing towns and hamlets, smiling wheat fields and colourful tulip beds were all standing on "man-made" land. The land, of course, had been made by God but then He had meant that to form

the sea bed. The patient Dutch built dykes and drained the sea. A reclaimed piece of land was called a polder. On these polders—or dry sea beds—they methodically planted the flora and fauna of the Netherlands. Every care was taken to see that the reclaimed areas grew up exactly like the rest of the Netherlands. The architecture of the new buildings was the same as those in the “old territory.” Care was taken to see that even the proportion of population of the Protestant majority and the ever-growing Catholic minority in the reclaimed area reflected the proportion in the rest of the Netherlands.

It seemed to him, as Ram Singh flew over the polders from which the sea water was still drying, that in Kashmir, what India had done was to construct dykes to contain a sea of fanaticism bottled up in Pakistan on partition. When the polders dried, there would be time enough for planting the seed of a secular state on borderland areas. Meanwhile, the people of Pakistan were building their dykes too: already they had planted joint electorates and the polders were being ploughed for other crops.

The more he thought of it, the more he became convinced that apart from a theocratic state being reactionary and a secular state being progressive, there was a universality about the secular state idea which one missed in a theocratic state.

What would the world come to if every State were to revert to the theocratic concepts of the middle ages ?

How would the States avoid a revival of the old religious wars? Would not the representatives of each religious State behave as if they were superior to all the rest by virtue of their "superior" religion? Even now the representatives of some of the States were bitten by the bug of national superiority and sometimes even racial superiority. Would not these faults be exaggerated and magnified when combined with the urges and passions of religion on a State level?

After all, why should one assume that the two-nation theory was permanent even in Pakistan? It seemed to Ram Singh that fanaticism had in fact no deep roots in Pakistan. In undivided India, it was a Congress ministry that had ruled in the land of the Pathans. The Muslim League was never strong in Sind. Even in the Punjab, where the League managed to oust the Unionists just before the partition, the leadership had since passed into the hands of non-Muslim Leaguers who were not very much wedded to the two-nation theory and who had allied themselves with those who had opposed that theory. The League had not had much of a hold in East Bengal whether before or after the partition. Once it became clear that the Kashmir issue was not going to be settled by diplomatic pressure or by force, the people would compel their rulers to concentrate on their internal problems.

Ram Singh was confident that despite all the tricks of modern propaganda, the people would instinctively find the right path. Many had been the instances in

which he had found the people more right than the leaders. And the people had a way of exerting a silent pressure which no leadership could withstand indefinitely. The success of the first Asain-African Conference at Bandung was an instance of that kind. He recalled how gloomy the atmosphere in Bandung had been on the eve of the Conference. Every delegate was asking himself, "What on earth did we come here for? How is one to find common ground between pro-Western countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, the Philippines and Thailand—and at that time, also Ceylon, the anti-Western countries like People's China and the 'neutralists' like India, Burma, Indonesia and Syria?" By all the laws of probability, the Bandung Conference should have been a flop.

But from the first to the last, the crowds which mobbed the delegates, cheered them wildly and regarded them as heroes had no doubt at all about the outcome: it was going to be an "historic" conference which would make the voice of Asia and Africa heard in the wide world with a new respect. At last a stage came when the statesmen realised that whatever be their mutual differences, they just could not afford to disappoint those crowds. Having been responsible for rousing the enthusiasm, they had to do something which would keep it up. Compromises became inevitable under such circumstances.

The masses, despite their ignorance and illiteracy, could be misled for some time, but, somehow, they

managed in the end to pick out the true prophets from the false the same way a school boy could distinguish between good and bad teachers. All the efforts of British propaganda had been directed at one time towards persuading the Indian people to give up their faith in Gandhiji. But their propaganda had the exact opposite effect.

Yes, the sea of fanaticism would dry up even in Pakistan if the dykes in Kashmir were strong enough to withstand the fury of the waves.

CHAPTER V

VICTORY !

After Rajauri, Ram Singh took the earliest opportunity to visit the vale of Kashmir. Jammu had made him disturbed and unhappy. The misery of the refugees in Jammu, the graves of Rajauri—all these represented one aspect of the struggle. But while what happened in Jammu province was undoubtedly important, the fate of the Cause would ultimately depend on what happened in and to the valley.

The weather was again unkind. By the time he returned to Jammu town from Rajauri, it had started raining. The air field at Jammu was unserviceable. Had the Maharaja anticipated all the subsequent trouble which made him accede to the Indian Union, the first thing he would have done was to have an all-weather air field in Jammu and another good air field in Srinagar. But he had never thought that anyone would disturb the peace with the result that the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force had to operate under the most primitive conditions when they were ordered to rescue the State from the clutches of the invader.

When the rains abated and the air field became dry enough for Dakotas to take off from Jammu, the Banihal "went red" for some days. "Red" in this

context indicated not the Communist Party but the state of the weather. The aircraft had to fly between two peaks in order to enter the valley. When it was cloudy, or the Banihal "went red," in the language of airmen, the peaks and the gap in between became invisible with the result that the flights had to be cancelled. With more modern aircraft it should be possible to overfly the Banihal but that would also entail the installation of modern equipment at the air port at Srinagar in order to ensure that the aircraft which flew over the mountains would be able to land at Srinagar in any weather.

With the Banihal still frowning, Ram Singh turned to his old friend, "Jeewan". Once again, "Jeewan" was kind enough to arrange road transport for him. It was good that Ram Singh made his first trip to Srinagar by road and not by plane. The plane saved one a lot of time but when what one wanted to do was to spend some time seeing things and not to save time, the road was always preferable.

No two places could be more unlike than Jammu and Srinagar, separated by a flight of only fortyfive minutes by Dakota. Jammu was hot. Srinagar was cool. Jammu was dry and dusty. Srinagar was full of lakes and canals, the air was clear and the gardens full of roses and other flowers which filled the air with their sweet perfume. The hills of Jammu were mostly nothing more than mounds. In Srinagar, the lakes and canals and the winding Jhelum reflected the beauty and majesty of towering Himalayan peaks.

It was difficult for an outsider to distinguish a Jammu Dogra from some of the people in the Punjab. But the Kashmiri had features quite distinct from those of the Punjabi. While the Dogra was passing through a period of frustration because of the political changes, the same changes had given the people of Kashmir a sense of fulfilment. They greeted the visitor with an infectious smile. Their voice was gentle, their complexion fair and their faces remarkably free from any trace of worry or internal tension.

From Banihal pass one could see only the fair valley and not the people. But even from there one could sense fully the charm of the valley. The avenues of poplar and chenar, the vast expanse of water enclosed by the mighty Himalayas, and the green paddy fields wafted an atmosphere of sweetness and repose. The valley beckoned a visitor like a coy maiden her beloved. And as one descended from the mountain top along the road that seemed to coil round the hills like some mammoth python, one enjoyed the game of "hide and seek" with the valley. The valley would be lost to view for a few minutes only to appear more radiant and more beautiful than before.

Ram Singh's heart was pounding with joy by the time he reached the city of Srinagar. No town in the world had brought him that sense of excitement and wonder which filled him in Srinagar. Little did he realise, as he watched the happy crowds, that they had just gone through a severe winter on short rations and

that even as they were basking in the sun on the banks of the Jhelum and the boulevards of the Dal lake, they lacked the most essential of supplies like salt.

The happiness of the people was unmistakable as they got ready for victory celebrations. Every house and every houseboat flew the Red Flag—not the Red Flag with the hammer and sickle but the Red Flag with the plough, the symbol of the popular movement during the struggle against the Maharaja. They had chosen the Red Flag because red was the colour of the blood which coursed through the veins of all mankind regardless of caste, creed, race or sex.

The celebrations—marking the liberation of the valley proper—lasted a week. Processions passed through “gates” decorated with the costliest rugs and carpets, silks and shawls. The shawls had been woven of the finest pashmina wool brought all the way from Tibet. Some of the shawls were so delicate that they could pass through a lady’s engagement ring. “Are these shawls warm enough?” Ram Singh asked the salesman in one of the shops. The shop assistant laughed. “Wrap an egg in one of these shawls,” he said, “and you can have your money back if it does not become a chick by the morning.”

The shopkeepers displayed papier-machie products and delicate wood carvings. The fruit shops were piled with baskets of cherries, strawberries, apples, walnuts, apricots and peaches.

Kashmiri boatmen took the visitors around in *shikaras* with picturesque names. In soft and seductive voices, the boatmen sang of the love of Laila and Majnu; in tones full of pathos they sang of unrequited love, of the sorrow of the final parting; in strident tones they sang of militiamen beating back the tribal raider beyond Baramula. They boasted that they could recapture any mood of the heart and set it to the music of the oars.

Every houseboat displayed pictures of the leaders of the national movement, the most popular among them being one showing Gandhiji giving his famous toothless smile, with one hand on the shoulders of a Hindu boy and another on the shoulders of a Muslim boy wearing the traditional fez.

The main boat race had hundreds of "entries." Scores of *shikaras* tried frantically to catch up with the Maharaja's fastest boat with the "V.I.Ps." on board. The chances of the average Kashmiri boatman catching up with the Maharaja's best oarsmen were about the same as those of a bullock cart overtaking a motor car. But if the *shikaras* did not succeed, no one could say that it was for want of effort.

With hundreds of *shikaras* hitting each other, the oarsmen and passengers shouted and cursed. But they enjoyed the experience all the same. How the boats stood the shock of so many bumps was a wonder.

From morning till late in the night, the Moghul Gardens, the Nishat and the Shalimar were full of

holiday-makers. They spread their picnic baskets on the lawns. It was not a pretty sight to see so much litter at the end of the day, but then the Maharaja's autocracy was over and the guards who had watched over the gardens for years and maintained discipline among the visitors were afraid to interfere. The old order had vanished and the new had not yet struck roots. It would take some time for the people to realise that with responsible Government, the "Maharaja's gardens" had become their gardens and freedom did not mean the right to trample over flower beds and spoil the grass which had been grown with tender care.

A mammoth public meeting was held at the Maharaja's polo ground. It was, like so many other things, no more the Maharaja's now. It belonged to the people. And not being rich enough to own horses like the Maharaja, they put it to use as a public meeting place.

The Maharaja took part in all these celebrations. But he seemed so out of place. He could not have been very happy in that atmosphere, for Kashmir was celebrating not only its liberation—up to Uri at any rate—from the raiders but also the crumbling of his autocratic regime.

True, apologists could find excuses for him. They said that really speaking, he had not been an autocrat. He had left the governance of the State to some of the best administrators available in the whole

of India. He had not interfered in the day to day administration. And much of the blame for the vacillation over the future of the State prior to the invasion had to be taken by his Dewan who happened to be a Kashmiri.

But the forces of history were on the march and logic and reasoning were not of much avail even if there was some truth in what they said. Only the popular leaders could have inspired the resistance to the invasion, and that alone would have been sufficient ground to throw out the Maharaja.

With the people coming into their own, a new golden age seemed to have dawned and the bard sang of the forgotten glories of Lalitaditya and Zain-ul-Abdin.

The Maharaja still clung to his picturesque white palace near the Chashma Shahi—whose water had been compared by foreigners favourably with the famous Vichy water of France—on the banks of the Dal. But power had passed from the palace to the people. The palace had lost its significance and no one was surprised when, a few years later, it became a hotel.

One felt that one was in the land of revolution only when one visited Kashmir. The revolution in Kashmir was but a chapter of the revolution in India as a whole. But, somehow, one missed the pervasive spirit of revolution, so evident in Kashmir in those hectic days, in the rest of India.

The highlight of the victory celebrations was a drama about the invasion. There were tears in the eyes of the people when they saw the actors enact on the stage the atrocities committed by the tribal raiders in the name of the Pakistani-inspired *jehad*. There were bursts of applause when the Indian Army was shown driving out the raiders with the help of the people's militia.

People talked of Kashmir's "natural affinities" with Pakistan. One had only to see how the people were reacting to that drama, to realise the falsity of such arguments. If the people of Kashmir really felt at one with the people of Pakistan, what had prevented them from joining Pakistan when the Maharaja's authority broke down and the invaders reached the outskirts of Srinagar, almost near the air field? Even after the Indian Army had arrived on the scene, they had plenty of time to reconsider the accession had they been so minded. The Indian Army took a pretty long time to build up its strength in Kashmir, and during that time, if there had been a sizable section of the populace against the accession, it could have made it impossible for the Indian Army to remain in the valley.

One of the first things which the Indian Army did in Kashmir after the landing in Srinagar was to give arms to the militia which had gallantly set out with swords and sticks to meet the raiders before the Indian Army had had time to organise the rescue operation. If, as Pakistan made out, India had imposed herself on the

Kashmiris, this was the last thing that the Army would have done.

Ram Singh wondered what the militia would have done if the tribals had really pushed on instead of wasting so much time raping and looting and burning and plundering at Baramula. Perhaps, left to its own resources, the militia would have vanished into thin air. The men would have thrown away their sticks and swords and gone home. But while the military value of the militia, before the Army gave it training and modern weapons, was negligible, it was a terrific morale-booster. It gave the people something more than mere security—a pride in their race which had been shattered during the centuries of rule by the Pathans and Sikhs and Dogras. In the Maharaja's army there was no place for a Kashmiri, Hindu or Muslim. The recruitment used to be confined to Jammu. The Muslim troops recruited from Jammu deserted the Maharaja in the hour of crisis and went over to Pakistan. Only his own co-religionists remained true to their salt on the other side of the Banihal.

But while the communal rot set in Jammu, it was not only stemmed but completely overcome in Kashmir. In the militia—there was even a women's wing to it—there were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. In the emergency administration too there were Hindus as well as Muslims. Indeed, the words Hindu and Muslim signified nothing so far as Kashmir was concerned: what mattered was the success of the common cause.

The Kashmiris had good reason to claim that when the rest of India forgot Gandhiji, the torch lit by the Father of the Nation burned all the more brightly in the green valley.

And Ram Singh's mind went back to his own experience of the remarkable power of the Mahatma over men's minds—a power that uplifted and ennobled men and women and had proved its potency in distant Noakhali as much as in Kashmir. The scene shifted from Kashmir to a little hill station in Bombay State—Mahabaleshwar, 75 miles from Poona. “Cool green forests exude a refreshing perfume that soothes tired nerves; and the majestic calm of nature brings serenity to the troubled soul”: that was how Mahabaleshwar was described in the blurb.

The year was 1945 and the month May. Ram Singh had not gone to Mahabaleshwar to “soothe his tired nerves.” His was just a matter-of-fact, professional assignment of a journalist who had to “cover” the Mahatma's speeches, his visitors and his other activities along with other journalists competing with each other for the headlines in the morning newspaper.

Gandhiji was “resting” in Mahabaleshwar. The individual *satyagraha* movement had been called off for the moment but most of the Congress leaders were still in jail. The country expected him to “do something.” That was why the journalists refused to believe that he was just recouping his health in Mahabaleshwar.

Ram Singh had never seen Gandhiji before, though he had a few opportunities of doing so. But he had formed certain impressions about him from the speeches and statements of his that flooded the daily press. Somehow Ram Singh had imagined that a person who had such a vast following in the country must be looking strong and powerful and issuing his orders in a voice that breathed fire and brimstone. He found instead an old man who could walk with some difficulty, leaning on a walking stick or on the shoulders of one or two of his admirers. His voice gave Ram Singh another shock : it was so feeble that one had to strain one's ears to catch it.

Ram Singh also thought that a leader of Gandhiji's standing would be thinking of independence all twentyfour hours and would not take part in any talk or discussion that did not directly relate to that single objective. But he was greatly disillusioned when he talked to the visitors to whom the Mahatma had granted audience. Many of these interviews were not even remotely connected with the task in hand. An old man, for instance, had been with Gandhiji for over an hour. He told the pressmen later that he had discussed with Gandhiji a purely personal problem : his daughter had run away with his neighbour's son and he wanted the Mahatma to advise him as to whether he ought to attend their marriage or boycott it. Another gentleman who had taken up two hours of Mahatma's time had debated

with the inmates of the *ashram* the advisability of launching a *satyagraha* movement to protect the cow: it was obvious that this particular crusader cared more for the cow than for independence. Ram Singh wondered how Gandhiji could tolerate such cranks.

After a few days of watching such comings and goings, Ram Singh wondered whether the old man was a hoax. And yet he felt drawn to him. There was something in him that seemed to lift him above the crowd even when he so freely mingled with it.

Then one day there occurred an event which showed the Mahatma in a truer light, in his role as the undisputed leader of the Indian people. A couple of hundred scouts and guides had come from Poona for their annual camp. They wanted to give a reception to Gandhiji. Gandhiji accepted the invitation and the reception was accordingly arranged in a tin shed put up in a clearing in a thick forest. Those scouts and guides had trained voices. They rendered the *Jana Gana Mana* with great feeling. Ram Singh had since heard the *Jana Gana Mana*— no one had imagined then that it was destined to become the national anthem soon— being sung before hundreds of audiences. But it seemed to him that no one had yet beaten that fine team in Mahabaleshwar.

The Mahatma spoke while the audience was still under the spell of the song. He began his speech by calling, as usual, for "pin drop silence." He spoke

calmly and quietly as he always did whether he was discussing politics or religion, matters of great moment or small. But that evening, his low-pitched voice seemed to have acquired a new timbre which one who had heard him during his evening and morning walks and at prayer meetings could clearly detect. "We are not fit to sing Gurudev's songs" he said. "The song you have just sung, *Jana Gana Mana* is meant for free men, not for the slaves that we are."

Ram Singh's blood rushed to his temples. His head was swimming.

"India," said the Mahatma, "is like Draupadi when the Kauravas were trying to dishonour her. The Pandavas stood by helplessly, bound by their *dharma*."

There were tears in the eyes of many members of the audience. But Gandhiji had no use for tears. In his eyes was a steely glint which his spectacles failed to dim. The inflection of his voice was the same as when he began. If he felt any emotion, he did not betray it.

Gandhiji went on, "There are many dear friends of ours who think that individual *satyagraha* has been ineffective and want me to call it off finally. Perhaps they are right. Well, if the British Government is still not convinced about the need to do the right thing by India, we shall have to launch mass *satyagraha*."

It was a short speech, but to the British it was certainly not sweet. Within less than a couple of

minutes, the leader of four hundred million people had issued an ultimatum to the British Government. He had in effect warned the British that if they refused to release Nehru and Patel and the other leaders and start negotiations with the Congress for the transfer of power, they would have to face another "quit India" movement.

Gandhiji's camp now looked like the battle headquarters of a seasoned general. Ram Singh felt that at the command post was a man with plans all mapped out to the last detail. Behind his gentle voice and kindly manners were nerves of steel, an iron will that would lay low the mightiest empire in the world. His greatness was that he never complained about the material with which he had to fight his battles. He had the capacity to transmute dross into gold. He could turn cowards into heroes, blackmarketers and racketeers into selfless patriots, an unarmed people into the deadliest army in the world armed with the unique weapon of truth and non-violence.

Ram Singh realised that if Gandhiji seemed to take too long to come to a decision, it was not because of any fear of the consequences but because of the weight of responsibility that he felt. When millions waited for his word of command, he had to be doubly careful not to give them the wrong lead. What seemed to single out Gandhiji from other leaders was the fact that while the others thought only of the coming fight, he was anxious not only about the outcome of the battle

but about ends and means; he was not prepared to reach even the best of ends through means that were not in keeping with his conception of truth and non-violence.

The Gandhian "magic" enveloped all who came in contact with him. Sometimes its effect was immediate. On some, as in the case of Ram Singh, the process was gradual. But none who had had the privilege of coming in touch with him even indirectly could escape from his ennobling influence.

It was fortunate that Kashmir had had the good fortune of a visit by the Mahatma when the people there were in the final phase of their struggle against autocracy. When the invader menaced their newly-won freedom, the Gandhian influence enabled the Kashmiris to hold fast to the only weapon that could have safeguarded it—Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity.

Ram Singh was confident that the people of Kashmir would never cast away that precious gift of the Mahatma into the Jhelum. If they did, it would be a tragedy not only for Kashmir but for the whole of India.

CHAPTER VI

SWASTIKA AND CRESCENT

Ram Singh had once for his room-mate a young German, well-built, fair-haired and blue-eyed. Hitler had perished and his chief lieutenants had all either committed suicide or been hanged but this young Nazi still remained utterly loyal to the star that had set.

Every year, on Hitler's birthday, this German used to take a razor blade and carefully draw on his wrist the symbol of the swastika, the ancient Aryan—"Teutonic," as he used to say—symbol. It was a rather painful process but he would go through the ordeal year after year quite cheerfully.

That German had a theory about Hitler's downfall. The "fatal mistake" that Hitler committed, according to him, was not that he had taken on enemies from both the East and the West simultaneously, but that he had "inverted" the swastika. The Indian swastika, he used to say, was the original swastika. The Nazi swastika turned the "movement" backwards—unlike the Indian swastika which seemed to "rotate" in a clockwise movement and hence could go on for ever.

All people needed symbols to express their deepest aspirations. When India became free, she deliberately avoided both the ancient swastika, which would have

been acceptable only to the Hindus, and the crescent and star, which had been appropriated by Islam. She turned to the *dharma chakra* which symbolised the eternal message of peace and tolerance which did not conflict with either the way of Hinduism or the way of Islam—or at any rate did not appear to do so.

But were the swastika and the crescent moon irreconcilable? Kashmir gave the most convincing proof that people could remain completely loyal to their different faiths and yet unite in a common cause. And it gave that message of unity at a time when faith in the values of nationalism was getting dimmed by the painful communal incidents of the partition, when many people began to wonder whether this country could progress only on the basis of one-religion-one-state.

Somehow, due to the unhappy turn of history, too many people still believed that Hindu and Muslim in this subcontinent were destined for ever to be at feud with each other. Yet communal concord had been a recurring theme of Indian history as much as communal conflict. The experience of other Islamic countries clearly showed that conflict with other communities was not an inevitable feature of Islam.

Indonesia was a living example of Hindu and Muslim cultures fusing into a common national culture. The extent to which the Hindu and Islamic traditions had merged in Indonesia was brought home to Ram Singh when, in the course of his stay in Djakarta, he

attempted to buy some silver ware. The shop assistant was an "Indo"—born of mixed Indonesian-Dutch parentage—and the shop itself was owned by a Dutchman. The shop assistant showed him some spoons which attracted attention for the curiously drawn pictures of men and women and monkeys on the handle. The pictures could not be called beautiful, but they were stylized and there was something about them which struck a chord in him and revived memories of his motherland.

The lady said, "You, Indian?" in stilted English. She was a very pretty girl. She had the daintiness of the Indonesian and the business brain of the Dutch. "Yes, me Indian," Ram Singh replied, trying to imitate her language. "This," she said pointing to a handle, "is Ra-ma-ya-na". "This Rama, this Arjuna, this Sita, this Hanuman."

"Where did you get these patterns from?" he asked her, dropping his pidgin in his surprise. He had not expected to stumble on the heroes of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*—of course, like so many Indonesians, she had mixed up the two—in Indonesia. The smart shop assistant replied, "From *wayang*." The *wayangs* were shadow-plays which were very popular throughout Indonesia.

Of course Indonesia was not so far away as one usually imagined. The feeling of distance, he now realised, had crept into his mind because of the normal route followed by the scheduled air services. Aircraft

usually reached Indonesia via Rangoon, Bangkok and Singapore. But one could avoid touching foreign territory by flying from Calcutta direct to Indonesia via the Nicobars. In fact the air forces of the two countries were operating a courier service by the direct India-Indonesia route. They used ordinary Dakotas for the service, not long-range aircraft like Constellations and Super-Constellations like the scheduled services. The Dakotas left Calcutta, refuelled at Car Nicobar and again at Medan in Sumatra and landed in Djakarta.

Nowhere was the fusion of the Hindu and Islamic strains more in evidence than in Java, where fifty million people out of the eighty million inhabitants of Indonesia lived. The Javanese had received both Hinduism and Islam through India. They did not regard the two traditions as being opposed to each other. They set about getting the best from both, and produced something which modern India found it difficult to emulate.

Communal unity was not a theoretical problem for the Javanese. It was as necessary to them as it was to India. Being in the majority, the Javanese had a special responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in Indonesia. They had to inspire confidence among the Hindus in the neighbouring island of Bali and the small but powerful Christian communities scattered in other islands.

In Java and the rest of Indonesia, communal unity was not something which had been imposed from the

top but had grown from the bottom. There were misunderstandings between different island communities but never between Muslim and Hindu or Muslim and Christian as such.

When Muslims wanted to build a village mosque in Indonesia, the Hindus in the nearby village would contribute voluntary labour. When the Hindus wanted to build a temple, the Muslim neighbours gave them a helping hand.

In such an atmosphere, it was but natural that when a fanatic of either religion from the Indian sub-continent toured Indonesia denouncing the other religion, the Indonesians did not take him seriously. They might give him a polite hearing but when his back was turned, they would say among themselves, "What a strange man ! Why could he not have praised his own religion without running down the religion of his neighbours ?"

The very names of the Javanese were proof of their spirit of tolerance and friendship. The citizen of Java usually had one Hindu name and one Arabic name. The phonetic spelling adopted by the Indonesians, and the complication of Dutch pronunciation, made Indonesian names look strange at first sight. From the Roman alphabet that they had adopted for Bahasa Indonesia, they had dropped 'Y,' 'C' and 'V.' 'J' was pronounced as 'Y', and 'Dj' as 'J,' 'C' as in "cinema" was spelt with 'S' and 'C' as in 'cat' with 'K' and 'Ch' in change with 'Tj.' When an Indian

understood these minor differences, Indonesian names became remarkably familiar to him.

One of the prominent political leaders in Djakarta was named "Jusuf (Yousuf) Wibisono (Vibhishana)." In India, Vibhishana was respected but one did not name one's son 'Vibhishana.' In Indonesia, he came across not only Vibhishana's name but also Ravana's. Ravana beer was very popular in some parts of Java. Some enterprising brewer chose this name for his product arguing that Ravana, whatever his faults, was a strong man and 'Ravana beer' would be an appropriate name or a strong beer.

The Indonesian Muslim regarded Islam as his religion and Hinduism as part of his cultural heritage. He saw nothing wrong in going to his mosque and saying prayers there, and then coming home and seeing a 'wayang' shadow or puppet play depicting the heroism of Arjuna or Lakshmana. The most popular name adopted from the *Mahabharata* was that of Arjuna. Djakarta had innumerable curio shops named after him. Indonesians believed that Arjuna married in Indonesia. There was also a mountain in Java named after him.

The Indonesians were very serious about what was written in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. As a matter of fact, at the round table conference with the Dutch on West Irian or Dutch New Guinea, the Indonesians argued that West Irian had been Indonesian since the time of the *Ramayana*. In support of that claim they

quoted a passage in which Rama, in giving instructions to Lakshmana about the places where he should look for Sita, had clearly mentioned as the boundary of the "spice islands" (Indonesia) a mountain with snow on top. Now, there was one mountain which was snow-clad in all the ranges between Malaya and Australia, and that was located in Dutch New Guinea. The Dutch representatives rubbed their eyes, made themselves sure that the Indonesians were not kidding, and solemnly pronounced that the Indonesians were relying not on history but on mythology. Of course the reply did not convince the Indonesians.

Wandering around Java, Ram Singh felt that the stories of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the heroism of Rama and Lakshmana, Hanuman and Jatayu, of Arjuna and Bhima were perhaps more popular in Muslim Java than in Hindu India. He had never come across strip cartoons illustrating the tales of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in India. But in Indonesia, one could get most artistically got up strip cartoons on the subject from street corner hawkers. They were all produced and printed locally and they sold like hot cakes.

It might surprise one in India to learn that one of the first things that the Indonesian Government did after attaining independence was to restore the Hindu and Buddhist temples in Java. These temples were not only ancient but most impressive. Architecturally, they

were superb. In India, when the proposal was originally mooted for the restoration of the temple of Somnath, there were some people who felt that this should not be done in a secular state, that the restoration might seem to outsiders like Hindu revivalism and so on. But not one Muslim in Indonesia objected to the Government spending large sums of money on the restoration of Hindu and Buddhist temples at a time when money was badly needed for rehabilitation. The Indonesians were convinced that the restoration of those temples would contribute to the revival of their national spirit. After all, were these not their temples? Had they not been built by their great forefathers? Even if they no longer needed them for saying their prayers, they could go and admire those proud monuments of their civilization. So President Sukarno himself opened those temples when the work of restoration was completed.

One breathed the air of tolerance in Indonesia. Ram Singh once visited a place called Malang in East Java. It was not very far from the great naval base of Sourabaya. Near Malang, he saw a well-preserved temple. As he was admiring the temple, an old lady—a Muslim lady—came and placed a flower reverently on a *shiv ling* which was placed in the garden. For giving tourists a better view, the images had been taken out of the temple and kept in a prominent place in the temple compound. The lady was happy to see an Indian and asked him about temples in India. She

told Ram Singh that she was a regular visitor to that temple. Every morning she would first go to the mosque and pray there, and then place a flower on the *shiv ling*. The prayers in the mosque were for salvation. The flower for Shiva was to maintain the family tradition.

That might have been a rare instance, but the very fact that the neighbours did not think ill of her for going to temple was significant. If a Muslim woman was known to be offering flowers to the image of Shiva in India, her life in her *mohalla* would be made miserable. Of course such a thing was impossible in India for the simple reason that the Hindus did not permit Muslims inside a temple.

One could see danger signs even in Indonesia, which only showed that the fight for a secular state and religious tolerance was a permanent fight. One could never relax. There were purists in Indonesia who wished to 'purify' Islam of its "un-Islamic impurities". The desire for purification and the spirit of revivalism erupted like a rash in all religions.

Talking of purification and revivalism, Ram Singh recalled one of the itinerant Christian missionaries who had built up a considerable following in a part of Western India by a novel technique. He would descend on an unsuspecting village and order the villagers to light a fire. They usually lit a roaring fire, for fuel was plentiful there and cost practically nothing.

The priest would then ask the assembled men, women and children in a voice of doom, "Which one of you will go very near the fire and stand still for fifteen minutes?" Naturally, it was difficult to find volunteers. It was sultry enough without the fire. Then he would declaim, swinging his powerful arms, "If you cannot approach a fire lit by our humble hands, you can well imagine how much hotter will hell fire be. That is the place where each one of you will have to go if you do not follow the Commandments of the Lord." That kind of revivalism perhaps did more good than harm.

Hindu revivalism too took various forms. One of the post-independence developments in some parts of Malabar, for instance, was the introduction of the festival of fire-walking. Ram Singh had witnessed it himself in a village in Kerala. The ceremony had been held in a rice field from which the harvest had just been gathered--the land there was so rich that sometimes the farmers managed to raise not two crops a year but three. In the middle of the field, a deep pit, thirty feet long, was dug. It was then filled with dry firewood.

The fire was lit and the wood crackled. After some time, the blaze, fanned by a strong breeze, reduced the wood to burning charcoal.

The devotees bathed in the village tank and assembled under a nearby peepul tree, to which a neem tree had been "married" with great ceremony a few years

earlier. The village oracle was then filled with the spirit of God and waved a sword. They said that in that condition, with the spirit of God protecting him, no harm would befall him even if he struck his head with the sharp edge of the sword.

After prayers, the crowd suddenly started chanting, "Govinda," "Govinda," "Govinda". Soon it became a frenzied shout and "Govinda" became mutilated into "Koitha" which meant nothing and conveyed nothing except the fact that the crowd was too excited to know what it was saying.

But the shouts ceased as suddenly as they began. The oracle took out a handful of sacred ashes and called out the devotees one after another and gave each a pinch. A few were summarily rejected and asked to appear at the same spot the next year. The majority were "approved" for the honour.

Those in the "approved" list stepped into the pit barefoot, led by the oracle. None of them wore any shoes. That was nothing new. They normally went about unshod. They wore *chappals* or shoes only when they went to the cities where the road was tarred or concreted, with the result that the soles of their feet were as strong as buffalo hide. But, surely, even their feet could not be 'fire-proof'. And then, mingled among the regular devotees was a sprinkling of school boys from Bombay, who had tender feet. They were walking through the fire as effortlessly as their elders.

All the devotees emerged unscathed at the other end of the pit and went back home none the worse for having literally gone through fire.

The fire-walking rites usually took place at night. Next morning, almost invariably every one of the devotees would declare that he had felt nothing.

Ram Singh wondered whether such ceremonies could be described as 'reactionary' or 'progressive'. Obviously, they had a good effect on the morale of the village. But one also became apprehensive as to where all this was leading to.

In Kashmir too, there were signs of revivalism. One of the prominent leaders was trying to prevent the Kashmiri Muslim from participating in the *urs* or religious festivals which were a prominent feature of life in the valley. These festivals attracted members of all communities and hence those who wanted to prevent the inter-mingling were trying to make out that such celebrations were 'un-Islamic'.

The relationship between Church and State was difficult enough in states which could be described as mono-religious. In multi-religious communities they had to be handled with even greater delicacy. Certain forms of revivalism might be harmless and others not so. So a secular state had to keep a watchful eye on them with a view to safeguarding the ideological foundations of the state. If it interfered in a way that aroused resentment, the country as a whole would

have to pay dearly. But neutrality might in certain circumstances be even more dangerous. One had always to balance the risks. Religion could be used as a cohesive force but it could also become a fissiparous force.

Perhaps one factor which might prevent revivalism from turning into fanaticism was the awakening of women. Women were on the march and having learnt by experience that they enjoyed more rights in a progressive society than in a society dominated by conservative elements, they might use their new-found power wisely. It was not an accident that more and more, women whom custom had hidden behind the veil were coming out. Muslim women were even demanding a ban on polygamy. In Indonesia, for instance, all the most active women's organisations were campaigning for monogamy. Unlike the majority of Muslim women in India, the Muslim women of Java were unveiled. They were also socially the equals of men. They did not suffer from any inferiority complex at parties and receptions. They worked hard, were not afraid of talking to strangers and played a vital part in the economic life of the country. The orthodox were trying to put a curb on their anti-polygamy drive but the educated Indonesian women were not convinced by arguments that would have appealed to their mothers. When the menfolk argued with the women that the *Koran* allowed a man four wives, the Indonesian women were quick to retort that the Prophet had not given

that right as an absolute right. That 'so-called right' was limited by the injunction that a person with more than one wife would have to treat all his spouses impartially, and as the average human being was bound to show favouritism to one if he had several wives, it clearly implied that the *Koran* was really in favour of monogamy. *Mullahs* did not accept this argument but the main political parties conceded privately that if fifty per cent of the voters were going to insist on the one-man-one-wife formula, there was nothing to stop them.

As happened with all progressive movements, the success of the campaign for monogamy in one country was bound to have its repercussions on others. When the Hindu Code, abolishing polygamy among the Hindus, was introduced in the Indian Parliament, its opponents argued, "Either have monogamy for both Hindus and Muslims or wait till the Muslim community is ready for it." The Muslim community was not yet ready but the Hindu community was, and so the Hindus were allowed to go ahead. If a Muslim country like Indonesia were to adopt a similar law for its citizens, the goal of a common civil code for all Indian citizens would be nearer realisation.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE LAND OF ARABY

The Indonesian parallel, Ram Singh felt, was quite apt in judging of movements in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent because both regions had inherited the same basic traditions, though in the course of evolution other currents and cross-currents had also intervened. In all the three countries, Islam had been, so to say, superimposed on Hinduism. And except for Pakistan, the others had found no insuperable difficulty in reconciling religion and nationalism.

“But,” the critic might well say, “you cannot judge Pakistan by Indonesian and Indian standards. The pull in the case of Pakistan is towards the Middle East, not towards the softer civilization of South-east Asia. And India is after all a Hindu majority country and the superimposition of Islam has affected only a minority.”

But, then, what about the Middle East, the homeland of the Arabs, the original land of Islam? The Arabs—and, for that matter, the Turks and Iranians—were being drawn into the maelstrom of nationalism and not into the cesspool of fanaticism. Time had not stood still even in the most backward regions of the Middle East.

Outwardly, it might seem that Saudi Arabia, for instance, still lived in the Middle Ages. The slave market still flourished, though the Saudi Arabian delegates sought to justify it by saying that the slaves of Arabia were better treated than the 'white slaves' in the West. Indeed, they claimed they were moral superiors of the West because they did not allow the 'white slave traffic' to be plied in Arabia on the colossal scale in which it flourished in many of the cities of the West. The West retorted that punishment for crime was still meted out in the desert in the age-old fashion, by dipping the hand that stole in boiling oil and chopping it off with the sword and that surely did not indicate progress.

But if one could find century-old laws and customs still being observed in their pristine 'purity', one could also see Saudi Arabia skipping the centuries and entering the modern age of rationalism, humanism, science and technology.

Ibn Saud drove out the Hashemites from the Holy Places because their conduct did not measure up to his austere and rigid standards of Islam. But with the discovery of the 'black gold' of petroleum, the mental climate of Saudi Arabia began to undergo a subtle change.

Ibn Saud objected when it was suggested to the monarch that he should have a radio. But an enterprising salesman set up a battery set and tuned it on to Cairo when discourses from the *Koran* and other

Holy Books were on the air. If cabaret music had been heard by mistake, one wondered what the fate of the salesman would have been.

Religious music by radio was the first step. For the old generation, that itself was a giant step. But then the younger generations were bound to be interested in other things that were put out on the air—music and song, political news and the Voice of the Arabs. All that was bound to create a ferment that would result in the evolution of an 'international culture'. This culture need not necessarily be in conflict with Islam, though it might appear so to those steeped in the old ways.

Saudi Arabia had already acquired a vast fleet of aeroplanes. Aeroplanes needed trained pilots and radio operators and mechanics to run them. They could learn the 'know-how' only in the advanced countries of the West, and there was always the unavoidable risk that along with technology, they would also imbibe ideas of running a Government on modern, democratic lines. Feudalism could finance the training of technicians but it could not assimilate them.

Then there was the Army, which had always played a decisive role in Islamic countries. One could not arm the soldier of today with swords and spears and match-locks which could be locally produced and repaired. The modern Army would need an ever-increasing army of technicians. These technicians would,

like the airmen, bring into the desert the ideas of progress imbibed in the atmosphere of the West.

The successors of Ibn Saud had started to adapt themselves to the new requirements. Roads were being built. Schools and hospitals were rising. In the field of foreign policy, Saudi Arabia, despite occasional misgivings, kept in step with the forces of nationalism. That the new spirit was not skin-deep was proved by the warm welcome given to Mr. Nehru when he visited Saudi Arabia at the invitation of the King. There was a time when every non-Muslim was a *Kafir* to the Believer, and *Kafirs* were not respected whatever be their attainments. But Mr. Nehru, who had come to embody the new spirit of Afro-Asian nationalism, was greeted by large Arab crowds as the 'Prophet of Peace'. It did not surprise an Indian that the only voice of protest against this spontaneous demonstration of affection by the Arabs for the leader of the Indian secular state was that raised from Pakistan.

Lebanon was an Arab country with a Christian majority—at least they said the Christians were in the majority; the official figures had been challenged by some people. Rich Lebanon, the only Arab country which had no objection to receiving visitors with passports endorsed for Israel, lived in the middle of an Islamic sea. In its relations with its Muslim neighbours, and in the relationship between the Christian majority and Muslim minority within, there were difficulties. However, nationalism was at their bottom, not religion.

In Egypt one felt the real pulse of Arab nationalism, the driving power of ambition and the fierce passion of unfulfilled desire.

Ram Singh was dazed by what he saw in Egypt. Somehow, he had associated all Muslim countries with economic backwardness. He found that there were many poor people in Egypt but the average standard of living there was very much higher than in India. The first thing that impressed him were the skyscrapers. The buildings were far bigger than any in India. His own hotel was on the ninth storey of a building owned by a Lebanese. The enormous building activity was kept up at a feverish pace in the land of the pyramids. It seemed that every rich Arab anywhere in the Middle East would like to invest in real estate in Cairo. This was made possible by a peculiarity of Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism was at once national and regional. Arabism was not based on race. Racially, people inhabiting the Arab lands were by no means homogeneous. In Cairo itself one could see 'Arabs' who were as much Negroid by race as Arab. Indeed, in large areas of the 'Arab' lands, the Negroid strain seemed to predominate. In any event, Islam did not believe in theories of racial superiority and from time immemorial, the Arabs had been taking women of other races in marriage. Arabism was based purely on language, but then Israel could never hope to join the Arab League even if she were to give up Hebrew and have Arabic as the national language. Similarly, neither

Iran nor Pakistan would be accepted into the mystic circle of Arabism by their switching over to Arabic. Among the Arab countries, there was freedom of travel. People could also seek employment anywhere. According to the philosophers of Arabism, the 'Arab nation' extended from the Atlantic coast to the Arabian Sea and this 'nation' was divided up into administrative divisions called 'States'.

Nationalism in Egypt had already shaken many concepts about Islam fondly entertained in the West. A Muslim country was regarded as being necessarily anti-Communist. After the Egyptian arms deal with the Communist countries, the West had begun to have doubts on this point.

To what extent Egyptian nationalism owed its vigour to a few individuals and whether it was really rooted in the hearts of the people it was difficult to say. Perhaps in the initial stages the individual counted more than the mass but the mass would be able to take care of itself after it had had time to settle down.

On the positive side, nationalism had restored to the Egyptians the self-respect they had lost through centuries of foreign rule. In Cairo's many cafes, fitted with the latest Espresso machines and electrically operated squeezers for preparing fresh fruit juice, Egyptians told him, "We have been ruled by Greeks, by Romans, by Turks. Now at last, in Gamal Abdel Nasser, we have found an Egyptian to lead us".

To Egyptians, Farouk remained a Turk no matter for how many generations his family had settled down amidst the Arabs. For months after Farouk's exile, rumours were rife in the rest of the world about Farouk preparing to stage a comeback. But Egyptians never thought for a moment that such a contingency was even remotely possible. Their hatred of the Turk was next only to their hatred of the Jew.

Talking to the man in the street in Cairo, Ram Singh felt that the overthrow of Naguib was due to causes deeper than mere personal differences with Nasser. Naguib was half-Sudanese, not a full-blooded Egyptian.

At some point which it was difficult to determine, Egyptian nationalism merged with Arab nationalism. Islam had strengthened this nationalism. There was no reason why Islam could not have played a similar role in the Indian subcontinent, given the proper atmosphere.

The extreme anti-Israeli feeling among the Arabs did not at first seem to square up with nationalism. Nationalism necessarily implied co-existence among nations, and there was no denying the fact that Israel was there to stay as a nation. Once again, Ram Singh sought an answer not in the Foreign Offices and Chancelleries but in the streets. He found that religion had nothing to do with the Arab opposition to Israel. Rightly or wrongly, Egyptians—and Arabs elsewhere—considered Israel to be an intruder who had to be pushed

out of primordial Arab territory. They looked upon Israel in the same way as India looked upon Goa. Whatever international law might say about it, the Indian was convinced that Portugal had no business to be in Goa. They might have been squatting there for a few centuries but what was stolen had to be returned to the rightful owner. Similarly, the Arabs argued that one day the Israelis would have to pack up and go—it did not matter where, so long as the Arabs were able to regain their sovereignty over the whole of Palestine.

When the Israelis, the British and the French invaded Egypt, Egyptians did protect the Egyptian Jews. The Egyptian Jews for their part condemned the Israeli invasion. The Muslims of Egypt did not let their anti-Zionism turn into rabid anti-Jewish feeling. Despite all provocation, the Egyptians managed to restrain themselves, and this was the greatest tribute to Egyptian nationalism.

If Egypt was the throbbing heart of Arab nationalism, Syria was its 'head'. Ideas of Arab unity, the philosophy of pan-Arabism, all had their source in the ancient city of Damascus.

It so happened that Ram Singh landed in Damascus directly from Europe. At the air ports in Europe, people said farewell to each other by shaking hands or kissing. The good-byes were pleasing to the eye. Even the partings appeared joyous events. In Damascus on the other hand people wept when they said good-bye. They

wept also while greeting the new arrivals. To Ram Singh, it was like a home-coming. He had been away from home for nearly six months and his own mother and grandfather would weep like this when he returned to his village home. Joy and sorrow had one thing in common—tears. The ‘tear belt’ started in the Arab lands and ended on the frontiers of Burma. He had not seen Burmese, Thais and Indonesians weep at air ports. Perhaps they wept at home.

Damascus, which was said to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world and where one could still see a street mentioned in the Bible, was, like so many Indian cities, a strange mixture of old and new. There were the ancient mosques and covered bazaars which were a never-failing attraction to the tourists. The famous Damascus brocade reminded an Indian of the brocade of Banaras. The wood work and other products of Syrian craftsmen looked so similar to the products of deft Kashmiri hands. The roads and cafes were as modern as anywhere in the world. One could see women still observing the *purdah*. One could also watch the glamorous modern Miss in frock and high-heeled shoes bargaining with the hawkers in a way that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. As in Cairo, an Indian was welcome in Damascus. The bond of Afro-Asian nationalism united the Indian and the Syrian.

Under the compelling force of nationalism, the Syrians were doing away with all traces of Western influence. The West, accustomed to the gentler and

softer glow of Indian nationalism, attributed everything fierce to the Communists but the Syrians were not Communists. When they removed foreign statues from public places, when they changed road names to make them more 'Syrian', when they ordered Syrians with foreign names to change their names, they needed no prodding from Moscow. An educated Syrian gently chided Ram Singh when he found Ram Singh conversing with a fellow-Indian on the telephone in English. He was not convinced by Ram Singh's answer that Indian languages differed so widely from one another that educated Indians found it more convenient to transact their business in English. "What about Hindi?" asked the Syrian. "Of course Hindi will be the national language some day", Ram Singh told him, "but that is a long way yet. For the present, our aim is to make Hindi a common language of official communication between States in fifteen years". Ram Singh also found that many Syrians regarded India as being a little too 'pro-British'. They did not doubt India's loyalty to the cause of nationalism but they felt that India trusted the British too much and was allergic to anti-imperialism.

Ram Singh wondered whether such fervid nationalism in the Middle East would mellow in due course as it had done in India. But he was happy that it was not the dark force of fanaticism that was moving the Arab masses but the urge of nationalism. Too much of nationalism might not be a good thing but it was any way

preferable to communal fanaticism, casteism or provincialism.

From what he had seen and heard, Ram Singh was convinced that nationalism was not a hot-house plant in the Middle East. It had its roots deep in the soil and traditions of the Arabs.

Near the famous mosque of Damascus, which had been a Christian Church and before that a Roman temple, was a monument missed by most tourists, the tomb of Saladin. Ram Singh's guide was an educated Syrian, a fervent exponent of Arab nationalism and an admirer of President Nasser. Like many Syrians, he spoke French better than English.

The name of Saladin evoked memories of the Crusades, so vividly described by Scott. Ram Singh had always wondered how Scott had been able to write so powerfully about medieval knights and ladies gay, their tournaments and duels, about the period costumes and armour till he visited Abbotsford, Scott's ancestral home. When Scott wrote about armour and helmets, swords and scimitars, he was not drawing merely on his imagination. He had a fine collection of armour and weapons, skulls and skins, books and pictures to help him. He had practically converted his home into a museum.

The tomb of Saladin, as it stood at present, had been built, strangely enough, not by an Arab nationalist but by one who had wooed Arab nationalism and shown

a remarkable grasp of its symbols, the German Kaiser. Even now, after the disasters of two world wars, the German influence was quite strong in the Middle East. The East had always fascinated the Germans and even today, there were more books about the East in the show windows of German book shops than in British.

The guide asked Ram Singh suddenly, "Are you a Muslim?" "I am afraid not", Ram Singh replied. "I am a Hindu." "What does it matter?" the guide said. "We are all human beings first and then only we are Hindus, Muslims or Christians. That is why Sultan Saladin is admired as much in the West as in the East. He was a great man."

"When I read the account of English historians about the exploits of Saladin, I always think of Churchill's tribute to Rommel", said Ram Singh. "Rommel was an adversary but the great always recognise greatness in an opponent."

"I am not talking only of Saladin's great qualities as a General", said the Syrian. "I am referring to the greatness of his heart".

The Syrian was plunged in thought for a few minutes and Ram Singh did not want to break the silence. He sensed that the Syrian was trying to find words to express his innermost thoughts and the worst thing that one could do under such circumstances was to break the spell.

“Sultan Saladin,” said the Syrian when he spoke at last, “was a great King. But he was more than that. He was a great commander of men. But he was more than that. He was a great diplomat and statesman. But he was more than that. He was a great man. When the Christians conquered Jerusalem, they killed thousands and thousands of innocent Muslims. The Christian knights had their code of honour, but they had it only for themselves, to be applied to fellow-Christians and not to the followers of the Prophet of Islam. When Saladin was victorious with the blessings of *Allah*, he could have avenged their misdeeds. For every Muslim they had killed, he could have killed ten Christians. They were completely at his mercy. But Saladin told the Christians, ‘Friends, go back home. If you want horses or provisions, ask and they are yours. Be not afraid but do not try to come back to the Holy Land as conquerors.’”

No wonder an Indian found it easy to explain to the Arabs the Indian stand on Kashmir and India's ideal of a secular state. The ruling classes in this or that country might or might not support India but the common man realised that the Indian concept of a secular State was in keeping with the finest Arab traditions.

Ram Singh wondered how long Iraq would be able to remain coolly aloof from the forest fire of Arab nationalism. As he walked along the long Rashid Street

in Baghdad, soon after Suez, it seemed to him that for all the attempts at modernisation, Baghdad was essentially a feudal citadel. In Cairo and in Damascus, people would greet a stranger and talk to him about politics. In Iraq, people seemed concerned only with business. And business was good. The streets were dirty but new blocks of buildings were going up and there was no dearth of money. A waiter in a restaurant could easily make four hundred rupees a month. Food as well as luxury goods were much cheaper than in India. Among all the oil-rich countries of the Middle East, Iraq stood out as the one country where part of the oil royalties flowed back into the pockets of the common people.

Yet, there was something in the air of Baghdad which seemed to breed revolution. The people appeared to be uninterested in politics, but if that was really so, the ruling class would not have regimented the press and interfered in many ways with the free expression of opinion. Journalists from outside were not welcome in Baghdad and although visas were not refused, a lot of explanation was called for before they were granted. The sensitive visitor avoided Baghdad unless he had to go there. It was obvious that despite all the efforts of the ruling classes to avoid the influence of President Nasser, the people of Baghdad devoured every word of Nasser that came through on the air and which saw its way into print. It could only mean one thing: that Iraq was politically a smouldering volcano which would erupt any time. But that apart,

it was significant that even the ruling class of Iraq was trying to counter the influence of pan-Arabism not through religious cries but by attempting to assure the people a higher standard of living and a better life, and that was a good thing.

It was a tragic irony that free Turkey and free India should have so much misunderstanding. Indian nationalism owed much to the great Ataturk's inspiring example. But while for political reasons Turkey might vote with Pakistan, it was obvious to any student of political history that Turkey had more in common with the secular state of India than Pakistan with her cries of *jehad*.

Ram Singh would in any case never forget that it was from a Turk that he had his first lesson in secularism. That happened in Hyderabad-Deccan years ago, when a Turkish delegation, led by a former A.D.C. to the founder of the modern Turkish nation, visited the Nizam's capital on a goodwill visit. At that time Hyderabad was still the seat of a composite culture. But one could see signs that fanaticism was raising its ugly head.

The Turkish delegation had called a press conference on a Friday. One of the Hyderabad editors, who had been invited to the press conference, ~~arrived~~ ^{showed} up late. He explained that he had been to the mosque to say his Friday prayers. That was a good enough excuse, no doubt, and no one minded it. But he ~~went~~ ^{was}.

on to ask the delegation leader whether he had said his prayers. The delegation leader winced a little but mumbled something pleasant. The editor, a strong supporter of the two-nation theory, was persistent and repeated his question. The Turk was displeased but he did not want to pick up a quarrel. "In Turkey," he told the editor, "religion is a private matter."

The editor was angry at this hint that was thrown to him to shut up. "I thought Turkey was still an Islamic country," he hissed.

The delegation leader then burst out, "We are Turks first, Turks second and Turks last. It is none of your business whether we are Muslims or infidels. You talk of the brotherhood of Islam but how did the Muslims of other countries treat us? Whatever you may say about the Ottoman Empire, it had one great merit: it was based on Islam and knew no distinctions of race or colour. An Arab could aspire to the post of Prime Minister or Commander-in-Chief so long as he was loyal to the Empire. But at the first opportunity, the Arabs took British help and rebelled against their Caliph in the name of nationalism. Well, if nationalism is good for the Arabs, it is good enough for us too."

When the 'cold war' between the power blocs ended, Ram Singh had no doubt India and Turkey would resume the thread of friendship.

Another non-Arab country caught in the 'cold war' was the Muslim State of Iran. The spirit of nationalism

which led to oil nationalisation and extreme anti-Western feeling seemed to have gone under with the overthrow of Mossadeq. But it had revived in other forms—in the reassertion of the claim to Bahrein, for instance. When there was a press report that Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrein—all of them Muslim States—intended to form a third Arab Federation, the Iranian Prime Minister warned them that Iran would not give up her 'sovereign rights' over Bahrein and would resist any 'aggression' to 'the last drop of our blood'.

Muslim States could no more unite against the rest of the world than Christian States. *Jihad* was as out of date as the Crusades. It might still appeal to primitive tribesmen kept ignorant of the true nature of the Indian State but in the original homeland of Islam it was recognised as a cloak to aggression. Some people might still support Pakistan's claims but that support had nothing to do with *jihad* or the merits of the Kashmir case.

CHAPTER VIII

UNEASY STALEMATE

When officers became irritated at the slightest provocation, when lorry drivers complained that they were not able to get six hours' rest in a day but became indignant if anyone suggested to them that they should take a day off, when 'red tabs' or 'top brass' came and went, it meant the beginning of a new offensive.

The plans were, of course, 'top secret'. But the Jawan knew his officer as a mother her six-month old baby, and no secrets could be hidden from him. Nor, for that matter, from the civil population in the frontline. The civil population drew its own conclusions from the sudden increase in military movements.

On the night of May 17-18, 1948, the Army advanced from Handwara, forty miles north-northeast of Uri—the point up to which the raiders had been cleared before winter had put a brake on the operations of the previous year. The goal was Tithwal.

Ram Singh wondered whether man or mule had taken the greater part in the drive in that difficult terrain. But man and mule got along wonderfully. He discovered the close friendship between the two unexpectedly. He was resting against a rock, hidden from a mule company nearby, when he heard a strange conversation. "Be nice, dear girl, don't disappoint me, Bijli." He thought that some Jawan must be making

love to a hill belle when he heard the neighing of a mule. He got up and found a bashful Jawan patting a mule.

Ram Singh was fascinated by the mules. After a few days with a mule company, he too began to love them. Then a little incident made him shy away. No, it was not the famous mule kick. It was the mule barber. One day, when he was on a visit to a mule regiment, the colonel of the regiment asked him, "When did you have your last hair cut?" Ram Singh defended his long hair by arguing that he had not been to base camp for weeks and hence he could not be expected to be as trim as at Army Headquarters in New Delhi. The colonel laughed. "I am not blaming you," he said. "I just wanted to ask you whether I can lend the services of my personal barber to you." Ram Singh accepted the offer most gratefully and apologised. The barber refused his tip. "I am paid by the Government," the barber said, and explained, "I am the regimental barber. I cut the hair of the mules—and of the officers." Somehow, the idea of the same barber cutting the hair of the mules and the officers upset him. But he got over that feeling. After all, what was the difference between officers and mules? So far as the barber was concerned, the only difference was that the mules never complained against his artistry while the officers sometimes did.

No, the mules never complained, no matter how steep the trail or how heavy the load. One had to load a mule very carefully though loading a mule was

almost a fine art. If any mistakes were made, the mule would not be able to maintain its balance and beast and baggage would be at the bottom of a ravine. However, it was only rarely that a mule was reported killed. Even after a 20-ft fall, mules had been known to get up, shake their heads, shrug their shoulders and walk on as if nothing had happened—minus the baggage, of course.

The mules used by the Indian Army in the Kashmir operations were mostly imported. Some of them were from nearby areas. Some were from Argentina. Son Sargodha in Pakistan—pre-partition mules. With its only mule farm lost to Pakistan, the Indian Army started one at Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh) after independence. The Saharanpur farm had not yet been able to meet the Army's requirements fully but it had already made history by producing a mule which conceived and was delivered of a baby horse or ass—how the farmer forgot which. If even a mule could conceive in the Indian climate, no wonder the planners were worried about its over-population.

The Jawan owed a deep debt of gratitude to the mule for its qualities of stubbornness and endurance. No other animal would have been able to keep him regularly supplied as this 'man-made' animal. The muleteers never used the word 'mule' as a term of abuse. 'Ass,' 'donkey,' 'buffalo,' yes. But never a 'mule'. They had too much respect for their friend-in-need to permit of any disparagement.

The mules were very fond of *gur*. Some of the mule drivers spent part of their pocket money to buy *gur* for their charge.

While the mules were plodding their way towards Tithwal, the Army took up position on the snow-clad heights around the beautiful valley of Sonamarg. The river flowed fast near the valley but a little higher up, it was still frozen and a cine photographer took a picture of the Indian Army 'in action' in the 'Kashmir winter' (it was May and the flowers were in bloom).

Meanwhile, the Army mounted an offensive on the Uri front, about sixty miles from Srinagar on the highway to Pakistan. Aimed at Muzaffarabad, the attack was launched on May 20. This involved a march through thick pine forests on hills 7,000 to 10,000 ft above sea level. Supplies had to be taken by porters along trails too steep for mules. One of the piquets was three days' march from the forward base. That meant that if a team of porters was sent out with food and ammunition from base, it would take one week to know whether they had managed to reach their destination or not.

Ram Singh waited tensely in Srinagar for an opportunity to visit the front. Something seemed to have happened at the front which had upset the Army's plans but nobody was willing to talk about it. Meanwhile, only the most essential traffic was allowed beyond Baramula. Journalists were positively not welcome beyond Srinagar. But Ram Singh obtained permission at last and set out for the front with high

hopes of being able to prevail on the tank commander, whom he knew very well, to allow him to sit in the leading tank that would blast its way through to Muzaffarabad and the Pakistan frontier. He even composed a despatch with a Muzaffarabad dateline.

True, after Muzaffarabad was taken, the Army would still have to clear part of Jammu, part of Ladakh, the whole of Gilgit and other frontier areas. But this would be the stunning blow from which the enemy would never recover—if the plans went according to plan.

He drove to a village called Urusa, fourteen miles beyond Uri, and there he was halted by a military policeman. Beyond that point, just within stone's throw of the entrance to the narrow Chakothi gorge through which the Jhelum flowed noisily on the last lap of its journey to Pakistan, no vehicle was allowed to proceed, for the road was commanded by enemy guns.

Then he realised why security had been clamped down so tight at Srinagar. According to the original plan, the Chakothi gorge should have been in the hands of the Indian Army by now and the troops building up for the next push.

Ram Singh was taken to the headquarters of the frontline commander. The commander knew he was coming. Not even a fly would have been able to get to Uri in an Army vehicle without his express permission. The 'man on the spot,' in such a situation, had

full authority to overrule his superiors in the matter of receiving visitors.

The commander seemed glad to see a journalist after a long time. For days he had been racking his brains to find a way of ending the stalemate. There were many ways of doing it, but he had to find a way that had a reasonable chance of victory. In the semi-political, semi-military struggle in Kashmir, plans involving loss of territory already liberated, in the event of the failure of an offensive had to be avoided. Particularly after Rajauri, the Army had no illusions about what would happen if the Pakistanis were to secure control.

After exchanging pleasantries, the commanding officer bared his arm, which was full of black spots. 'Tick', he explained. "The tick is more dangerous over here than enemy bullets. I am afraid that if we have to stay on here indefinitely, half my men would be down with tick fever."

"Why don't you use D.D.T.?" asked Ram Singh innocently.

"We haven't any", the officer replied with a wry smile. "We have tried all the tricks we had learnt. We have burnt dry leaves in our bunkers. When dry leaves are short, we use green pine leaves which burn pretty well. But the tick here seems to be proof against all known remedies."

"Why can't you get D.D.T. from Delhi? Surely there is no shortage of D.D.T. in India," remarked Ram Singh.

The officer replied, "There is not enough transport for bringing ammunition. How do you expect me to recommend waste of transport space by giving preference to D.D.T. packages? The health of the men is, of course, important but ammunition is even more so in the middle of a battle. Of course if a soldier is down with tick fever, it is as bad as a battle casualty. But without ammunition it would be murder".

The commander paused. Then he said slowly, "When we started the offensive, we did not know how many Pakistanis there were on the other side of the hill. We had, of course, expected a sprinkling of them but we had presumed that the bulk of the enemy would be tribals and Poonchis. But there is a whole division of the Pakistani Army here. The tribals have disappeared. It seems they have had enough of it and so the Pakistan Army has come out in the open. It changes the whole situation."

Patrols had reported that the Pakistan Army had been digging in all winter. So the intervention had not been decided upon suddenly. It was as pre-planned as the invasion. The only part of the Pakistani plan that had gone wrong was the delay at Baramula by the tribals during the invasion itself which gave time to the Indian Army to save Srinagar.

The commander asked a junior officer to fetch something. He showed it to Ram Singh. "Looks like a mortar fin," said Ram Singh.

"4.2-inch mortar," said the commander.

"I thought the 3-inch mortar was standard for both the Indian and Pakistani armies," Ram Singh remarked.

"So many of our assumptions have been proved wrong," replied the commander, "that this particular matter is of no consequence. It really does not make much difference whether one is blown up by a 4.2-inch mortar or a 3-inch mortar. We had some 4.2-inch pieces too but we thought it was too heavy and we preferred the 3-inch. Incidentally, this thing dropped last evening at the exact spot where you are now standing".

"Where were you then?" asked Ram Singh.

The commander said, "Fortunately in the bunker. We did not realise that they had a mortar which commanded my favourite 'picnic' spot. But you are quite safe now. Our gunners have forced them to move it back where it won't be a nuisance."

"Talking of mortars and guns," said Ram Singh, "did you hear what happened to the General when he inspected the front a few miles from here the other day? Not gossip. I was told it was a fact. The General was inspecting the gun sites when the enemy opened up with his automatic weapons. Probably some snipers. The

gunners were worried over the General's safety and urged him to take shelter behind a rock nearby. But he gave them a lesson in Sandhurst nonchalance. The General said, 'A pity these chaps are wasting their ammunition so'. He then took out his white gloves and put them on 'to give them a sense of direction'."

"Well, that is how you build up morale," said the commander. When I joined the Army, my senior officer always used to tell me that the secret of success is to do something once in your life which will win the admiration of your men. Of course you cannot do this sort of thing by cool calculation. You have to make the gesture spontaneously."

The commander continued. "The men are tough but you get the best out of them only when they have a feeling that their officers are tougher. We are not accustomed to climbing the hills over here but we pretend as if we have been doing it all our lives in order not to lose face with the Jawan. But the strange thing is that after some time, you begin to like these hills despite the tick."

"Hope you won't like this place so much as to settle down here permanently. I am told Muzaffarabad is a better place." Ram Singh was deliberately provocative. He hoped that he had not annoyed the commander too much.

"I see you have been talking to the General," said the commander. If he felt angry, he had sufficient

self-control to hide his feelings. "He tells me every day, 'Push on, push on. Don't get stuck up.' Push on where? How? We have tried the left hook. It failed. We have struck to the right. We had to pull out our men, and the pulling out was not easy, I assure you. But we have not given up trying. We are still trying to work our way round the gorge."

"Isn't there any means by which you can blast your way through this wretched gorge?"

The commander smiled. "I thought the gorge was very pretty. You can write a good despatch about it. Green trees, blue mountains and that kind of thing. In fact I caught one of the members of my staff the other day composing a piece about it."

He continued, "Don't forget that neither side has any superiority in weapons. We have the same left-over weapons of the last war. We have been trained by the same British instructors in the same schools. There is only one difference: on our side, the officers are all Indian except for the Commander-in-Chief and a few advisers. On their side they have a sprinkling of British officers even among the frontline troops. But we have learnt our lessons from the British so thoroughly that a few British officers on their side does not make any difference. We are not very comfortable over here but they are not either on the other side of the hill."

"Someone—a senior officer, in fact, told me in Srinagar the other day that if we had some anti-tank

guns, we could have bust their bunkers," said Ram Singh.

"Don't forget that 'if'," said the commander. "Did he tell you where we could get a consignment?"

"Of course we were discussing the problem theoretically," said Ram Singh.

"Fortunately for your senior officer, I have to face the practical problem and leave him free to evolve his theories," the commander commented.

"What would happen if with all the limitations of men and weapons you were to make a frontal assault through this gorge?" asked Ram Singh.

"Casualties," said the commander. "Let us assume that we lose thirty per cent of our men in killed, wounded and prisoner. Let us also take it for granted that the casualties on the enemy side are far heavier—though the textbook says that the attacking side must always be prepared to take heavier punishment than the defenders in well-prepared positions. Well, the enemy replaces all his casualties with fresh troops within three hours from his bases in Pakistan. Where are my reserves?"

"I suppose over three hundred miles away."

"That is, if you take Pathankot. But that is only the terminal. The base is further back. And don't forget that we need not only men and ammunition but also food."

"Do you mean to say that you cannot get even food locally in this rich valley?"

"The pine forests are beautiful to look at but you cannot eat them. The terraced rice fields are good for picture post cards but they are hardly adequate to feed the local population. We do get some vegetables locally but we take care not to buy too much and push the prices up for the local population. We are here to help the people, not to make life more difficult for them through inflation."

The drone of a Tempest interrupted their conversation. The Air Force had been called in for the interminable 'softening up' process. It was a lone Tempest. The ground operator and the pilot were talking to each other in the peculiar drawl of the radio telephone operator. Words had to be so pronounced as to make some allowance for distortion. The end of every message was signified by the word 'over.' The 'overs' prevented the operator and pilot from talking at the same time. One wished the same practice would be followed by civilians, particularly at bridge parties when someone played the wrong card. The Indian Air Force had inherited the jargon from the Royal Air Force.

The Tempest strafed the enemy bunkers and zoomed up, then dived again. Whenever the plane flew towards the hillside, the enemy opened up with medium machine guns. The hill was too steep for

bringing up anti-aircraft guns which were being used by the enemy elsewhere.

"You are being fired at," drawled the operator.

"Can't hear any firing. Over," said the pilot.

The roar of the Tempest drowned the rattle of the machine-guns for the pilot but the hundreds of officers and Jawans watching the strike could hear both. One could not see the machine-guns. They were effectively camouflaged, though the upturned earth gave out the location of the bunkers to the trained eye.

The Tempest could not have made any difference to the situation militarily but its contribution to the morale of the men was tremendous. A famous English writer had written a touching story about a kite. Kite-flying meant a lot to those who sent them up into the pure air. It was much more than a mere hobby. The kites symbolised man's effort to satisfy a deep-felt desire, some urgent call within, to soar in the sky like the bird, to reach out for the stars. Man had no wings to fly but he could send up the kite which would do that for him. Similarly, the one thing which the Indian Army officers and men held up at the Chakothei gorge wanted to do was to get to grips with the enemy who had hidden himself in the safety of his bunkers. They could not get near enough to the bunkers but here was the Indian Air Force which could strike at them again and again any time the weather was clear. What did it matter if the bullets, rockets and bombs raining down

from the sky fell harmlessly on the hills ? The important thing was to have the sensation of continued contact with the enemy. If both sides had sat quiet without firing a shot, it would have driven the men mad.

But the officers and Jawans breathed more freely when the strafing was over. The machine-gun bullets were not dangerous but there was no room for manoeuvre in the narrow gorge and the slightest mistake in judgement or defect in the engine would have doomed plane and pilot. That sense of danger was a powerful bond between the Army and Air Force.

"Once we are through this gorge, nothing can stop us," said the commander, resuming the conversation.

"Sometimes," the commander went on, "I am tempted to throw everything I have into a decisive battle but then no one has a right to expose the valley to danger a second time."

"Aren't we far away from the valley?" asked Ram Singh.

"Yes," answered the commander, "but if we gamble on a quick victory and lose, we won't have enough strength left to stay on here. We may have to fall back on Baramula. It will be impossible to maintain the present supply line with fewer men,'

"Pardon me," said Ram Singh, "but you sound defeatist. I am casting no reflections. I am just trying to analyze what you are saying."

"You cannot analyze it militarily," said the commander, "This is as much a political question as a military one. I have been trained to obey the Government of the day and not to ask questions. But pure military thinking has no application to Kashmir. In a way the stalemate here is unavoidable once Pakistan makes up its mind to fight it out with its regular army—unless we are prepared to undo the partition.'

"How?" asked Ram Singh, rather baffled.

"We are committed to liberating every inch of Jammu and Kashmir," said the commander. "Well, if the Pakistanis are going to use their regular army here, either we give up that objective and stay put where we are or attack them in less forbidding terrain, if you understand what I mean."

"You mean that you will have to attack Lahore and also seize East Pakistan. I cannot see any other area which will satisfy that condition."

"Precisely," said the commander. "Of course we shall try again and again to break through the gorge over here, taking care all the time not to incur too great a risk. But if we fail, as I am afraid we may, then we attack where it will hurt the enemy most. But that will be a political decision which is beyond my province."

"So you believe in what we say in our complaint to the Security Council," said Ram Singh, "i.e. if Pakistan

does not vacate her aggression in Kashmir, the Government of India may be compelled, in self-defence, to enter Pakistan territory in order to take military action against the invaders."

"There is no question of my believing or not believing," said the commander. "That is the plain, unvarnished truth. I can assure you that what we have said in our complaint to the Security Council is not propaganda. Whether we have a leadership that is prepared to go by the inexorable logic of events it is not for me to say."

CHAPTER IX

FROM THE HEIGHTS OF RAZDHAN

Checked at Uri, halted at Tithwal and barred at Zoji La beyond Sonamarg, the Indian Army sought an outlet for the strength it had built up.

It chose the road to Gurais on the Gilgit route.

The march began from Bandipura, on the banks of the famous Wular Lake, thirtyfive miles north of Srinagar.

Ram Singh's journey from Srinagar to Bandipura in a fifteen hundred weight was quite uneventful. Half-way to Bandipura, an old man requested a lift. He must have been nearly seventy. Even in the midst of military operations, the Army never hesitated to stop its vehicles to help civilians in difficulty. The bus services had been disrupted by the partition. Many vehicles belonging to Indian nationals and State subjects who had operated the transport services had been seized on Pakistan territory before they could get away. Some of these vehicles were used, along with Pakistan Army vehicles, to bring raiders into the State. When the Indian Army originally relaxed the restrictions on Army transport being used to transport civilians, it had been intended to allow civilians only in exceptional cases. But within a few weeks the exception became the rule. If an Army vehicle did not stop to pick up

a civilian who waved to the driver, it became a matter of complaint.

Srinagar could be quite hot in the summer. Bandipur was hotter than Srinagar. Of course one could always get away from the heat by escaping into the hills.

Bandipur was a sleepy little town. With its cobbled streets and unwashed appearance, it looked more like a neglected frontier outpost than the busy caravan centre which it had been before the invasion. With the fall of Gilgit, the caravans stopped coming to Bandipur and trade dried up.

The town began to revive partially with the coming of the Indian Army. Local labour found work in road-building and other operations. The retail trade found in the Jawan a good customer. But the town had not yet been able to shake off its drowsiness.

It was dark when Ram Singh's party reached Bandipur. It was not easy to locate the Army camp, which was nestling at the foot of the hills away from the town. But the captain who was escorting the party managed to find it at last and lodge the party in a smoke-filled wooden hut.

There was a minor misunderstanding when the captain ordered dinner for the party. The officer was gifted with a gruff voice and when he told the Gurkha sentry on duty, "Fetch the cook," the Gurkha got the impression that the cook had committed some grave

mistake for which the officer wanted to punish him. Cooks getting into trouble with officers was nothing new. A common complaint in the messes was that they stole the rum ration. In the frontline, above a certain height, rum was supplied as part of the rations both for the officers and men. The cooks helped themselves to the rum rather liberally and occasionally it affected their cooking.

The Gurkha got hold of the cook by the scruff of his neck and produced him before the officer. The confused cook was trembling when he was brought. If he had really done something wrong, he would have kept his aplomb. But he had been posted to the mess only the previous day and he had not had the opportunity to violate any regulations. Anyway, he heaved a sigh of relief when he discovered that all that the officer wanted was dinnér. The officer was more confused than the cook when he discovered what had happened and the Gurkha was red-faced.

One had to be rather careful when giving instructions to the Gurkhas. They were ideal soldiers who obeyed the orders first and tried to analyze them afterwards. One of the Gurkha soldiers had been ordered to guard a key bridge in Kashmir with instructions not to let any vehicles through other than fifteen hundred weights. The idea of the officer in charge was that fifteen hundred weight and three-tonner convoys should be sent separately and should not be allowed to get mixed up. But the officer had forgotten to mention

jeeps and, as luck would have it, hardly had the officer returned to his quarters after giving his instructions when the G.I. came along in his jeep at fifty miles an hour. The "safe speed" of a jeep in that kind of terrain was supposed to be fifteen to twenty miles an hour. But the rank and status of a G.I., when operations were on, approximated by custom and tradition to those of Almighty God and no military policeman would think of pulling up a G.I. for speeding. His feelings could, therefore, be imagined when the Gurkha sentry cried, 'Halt'. And the Gurkha not only halted the G.I. but told him quite bluntly that he had orders to pass only fifteen hundred weights and if the jeep was to cross that bridge, it had to get the permission of the officer-in-charge.

The push towards Gurais began in the latter half of June 1948. Earlier, on April 28, 1948, I.A.F. Tempests made a concentrated attack on Traqbal, six miles north of the lake and fourteen miles south-west of Gurais. Traqbal was captured soon afterwards and Army engineers set to work on building a jeep road to Traqbal up the steep mountain. The first jeep reached Traqbal, 10,000 ft. above sea level, on May 21. Mules and porters carried ammunition and supplies another eight miles to 11,586 ft. high Razdhanangan, which was the base for the Gurais operations.

Going up to Traqbal by jeep gave one the creeps. It was the steepest road that the Indian Army engineers had built. Apart from innumerable hair-pin bends, the

jeeps had to negotiate a road which had no margin of safety. The slightest slip would have meant a free fall of anything up to three thousand feet. The drivers told several stories about that road. They said laughingly that one day, the Brigade Commander turned up unexpectedly at the Bandipur mess. He was very fond of minced meat and asked for his favourite dish to be made ready in an hour's time. But it so happened that the cook had mislaid his mincing knife and was at his wit's end how to carry out the Brigadier's order. He consulted a driver who was in the Traqbal convoy. The driver told the cook, "Why, that is very easy. Give me a live goat. I will take it to Traqbal and throw it down. I will eat my hat if it does not become minced by the time you pick it up." The trick, it was said, worked so well that whenever anyone ordered minced meat in that mess, the cook used to follow the same procedure. It was found out when it started raining and the jeeps could not go up.

From Traqbal to Razdhanangan, Ram Singh and his companions had to foot it out. They had only a faint idea of the kind of place they were going to. Some of the members of the party were dressed in light clothes. One of them had cotton socks on. None had a waterproof.

But they set out for Razdhanangan in high spirits. After all, it was a matter of three hours' walk. One of the members of the party carried a portable typewriter. Another carried a heavy cine camera. The captain

ordered their bedding and other pieces of luggage to be taken by mule. Otherwise they would have carried these too.

After fifteen minutes' walk, they discovered that walking in the mountains was not the same as walking in the plains. The man carrying the typewriter was the first to pant for breath. The others laughed at him. Then the cameraman began complaining that his load was too heavy. They then carried the typewriter and camera by turns. By the time they had reached half-way, no one laughed. They were completely exhausted by the journey.

The weather had till then been very helpful. But the clouds soon blotted out the sun. In the mountains, the weather changed suddenly. It rained almost every day.

A heavy drizzle harried the party at a place where there was no protection of any kind, not even trees. As if the rain was not bad enough, they ran into a blizzard. They shivered in the cold. Ice started forming on the bridge of their noses. They were afraid that they would all be frost-bitten by the time they reached Razdhanangan. But, somehow, they managed to stagger forward until they were picked up by a rescue party.

No wonder the Army tried as far as possible to avoid having guests on its hands during an operation. The officers had enough to do conducting the operations. Visitors were expressly told that they would be going

at their own risk but in practice the warning had no value, for if anything happened to them, the Army would be blamed anyway. Apart from that, hospitality was so much part of the Army tradition that to let thoughtless visitors stew in their own juice was just unthinkable.

The party was lodged in a rest house. An Army doctor arrived immediately to see his new patients.

It was difficult to imagine a more seedy-looking lot. All the high spirits of its members had been washed away in the blizzard. The shoes were wet and clothes wetter. No one in the party had brought a change of clothes.

The doctor was a Sikh who was accustomed to handling such cases. He had some mugs brought and filled them to the brim with what he called 'medicine'. "I am sure none of you gentleman wants to die of pneumonia. So don't ask any questions," said the doctor as he handed over the mugs to Ram Singh and his companions. They gulped the stuff. When he had drained the last drop, Ram Singh felt he had taken it before. It tasted like rum. He would have never believed it had anyone suggested to him that he could take a mugful neat.

Whether it was the effect of the 'medicine' or not, everyone's spirits revived soon. Just then news came through that fortyfive mules had died in the blizzard. The doctor complimented his 'patients' on being

'tougher than mules' but they passed on the compliment to the 'treple Patialas'.

The colonel, however, did not joke about the mules. The loss of so many animals meant that the mountain guns would have to be hauled up by the men.

The officers pooled their socks to give Ram Singh and his friends something dry to wear. There was no spare clothing but blankets were available in plenty: a heap of Frontier Constabulary blankets brought by the Pakistanis had been captured the previous evening. The blankets were full of lice but that was not the time to be choosy. They took off their clothes and wore the blankets like *dhotis*.

Unlike in the Uri-Chakothi sector, the Indian Army had the shorter supply lines in the Gurais sector. The fight here was, therefore, more against nature than against the enemy. Gurais fell on June 28 after the Indian Army had stormed 'Menon Hill' (12,857 ft), 'Shete Hill' (11,978 ft) and 'Kesar' (14,218 ft) under a hail of machine-gun bullets.

After what it had gone through in the battle for Gurais, the mountains held no terrors for the Indian Army. The victory at Gurais made up for the stalemate at Tithwal and Chakothi.

All officers and men who participated in the Gurais operations were flushed with the wine of victory. Its effect was much more potent than that of rum. But the Indian Army was not prepared to follow up the

victory. The operation had been launched with a limited objective, and having gained that, the Army diverted its attention to other sectors which were strategically more important.

Ram Singh remembered the snow-clad peaks of Razdhanangan long after he had forgotten the details of the Gurais operation. As the years wore on, the spell of Razdhan acquired an almost spiritual quality. The ethereal beauty of Razdhanangan, particularly when moon-light fell softly on the snow-mantled peaks, had to be seen to be believed. It was an exciting experience for anyone to stand at the edge of a precipice and gaze at the clouds—not above but below. The clouds hid the valleys and ravines and appeared motionless.

One's perceptions sharpened in that rarified air. One thought of things one had read long ago, one's childhood dreams and ambitions, the trials and tribulations of the past and the promise of the future. One realised why the seers and sages of yore retired to the Himalayas to meditate and ponder over the problems of the present and the hereafter.

Ram Singh remembered a strange conversation he had with a young officer one night at Razdhanangan. Ram Singh had imagined that the whole camp was asleep but for the sentries on duty. He was sitting on a log of wood and star-gazing when he felt a gentle tap on his shoulders. He found that it was an officer whom he had met in the mess. One look at him

convinced Ram Singh that he was as profoundly stirred and disturbed by the beauty of Razdhanangan as Ram Singh himself was.

“What are you thinking ?” asked the officer.

“Very difficult to say. All kinds of things.....” Ram Singh wondered what he could discuss with this officer. Man’s innermost thoughts could never be shared with anyone. One felt a profound truth whose validity seemed self-evident. But one fumbled when one tried to express it to someone else. Language had its limitations. But somehow he felt like sharing his thoughts with the officer. “I was thinking about Man and Superman,” said Ram Singh, “about man trying to surpass himself and creating his own values, about man who can soar to the highest heavens or sink into the deepest pits of hell.”

“Something of Nietzsche, something of the Upanishads—a strange combination,” said the officer. “Nietzsche did not recognise any heaven or hell.”

“Sometimes I think Nietzsche was right,” said Ram Singh. “Why should you need any heaven or hell ? Man himself can rise to the level of a God.”

“There is something unbalanced about Nietzsche’s concept,” said the officer. “For some time I felt the same way as you do about Nietzsche but when I read the Gita again, I felt that *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was lacking in something. The Gita produces an integrated

mind. Nietzsche produces a rebellious mind. Nietzsche may inspire a genius or a fanatic but not a strong man in the real sense of the word."

"What made you compare the two?" asked Ram Singh.

"The riots," said the officer. "I was torn by loyalty to my community and loyalty to the secular state. I am glad I chose the Gita and did my duty. Nietzsche is of no help in a crisis."

"Of course the followers of every religion will claim that their Holy Book is the best. Some even say that all the books except their own are wrong," said Ram Singh. "The German has this merit, that he did not found any religion."

"Yet, if you accept Nietzsche, you cannot accept the old religions," said the officer.

"I concede this," Ram Singh replied, "that here in the lap of the mountains, one seems to understand the spirit of Hinduism far more than in the plains."

"Perhaps," said the officer, "our Aryan forefathers halted here in this pass before they streamed into the plains. Perhaps they worshipped Shiva as the Lord of the Mountains not as a personal God but as a concept. And when they talked of life and death, they spoke in the same tone in which they would have spoken about a journey from one mountain pass to another. They were not particularly enamoured of life though they loved life,

and they were not afraid of death though they did not long for it. In other words, they were not men but supermen."

"Something on those lines was passing in my mind. You have interpreted it correctly," said Ram Singh. "Here it makes sense to bow to the mountains and rivers, the beasts of the forest and the birds in the sky, the animals which feed on grass and those which devour each other, the birds that sing of love and the birds that hover over the dead. One feels ennobled by prostrating before the snow-clad peaks. You are, so to say, not asking a favour of the peaks but seeking to draw into yourself part of the immense strength and grandeur of the Himalayas. All this gets corrupted in the plains where man is afraid of the Gods and tries to bribe them or to placate them and blind ritual takes the place of worship in the real sense of the word. Here one feels himself to be the equal of the Gods. In the plains one cringes before them. All thoughts of equality are held sinful."

"Are you sure you are not falling a victim to revivalism?" asked the officer.

"You mean I tend to glorify Hinduism in its pristine purity....." Ram Singh was trying to explain when the officer interrupted him.

"The followers of every religion," said the officer, "are agreed only on one thing: that their forefathers lived a life of rectitude but somehow corruption set in subsequently. Therefore, they argue, what is needed is to revive the glory of the past."

"No, I am not a revivalist," said Ram Singh. "I am just trying to understand. I don't care for any particular religion. That is why I like the secular State. Each man has freedom of conscience. He may pray all day in a temple or mosque or church or be an atheist."

"I hope my Jawans will never become atheists," said the officer. "All our battle cries are associated with religion."

"Perhaps you can find some alternatives," suggested Ram Singh.

"I suppose one can if one must," said the officer. "The Jawan in the ultimate analysis is motivated as much by ideas of honour and loyalty to his regiment as by the promptings of his religion. Anyway, no conflict of loyalties has arisen so far, and I hope it will never arise. There was a crisis of conscience for many of us in the brief period after the partition but we have left those days far behind.

"Since those days, I have seen the Mahrattas charge the enemy in Kashmir with *Har Har Mahadev* on their lips. The Sikhs fought against heavy odds in October 1947 with their famous war cry *Sat Sri Akal* which had made the Moghuls tremble. Muslims in Indian Army uniform cried *Allah-o-Akbar* when they rushed to the rescue of Kashmir. In a way, all religions are our ally in Kashmir."

It was nearly dawn when they went back to their quarters. They were not the only young men—neither of them was much above 25—who discussed religion and

the problems of life and death seriously. Others were doing the same on many a hill feature in the vast area that formed the frontline in Jammu and Kashmir. They were preparing spiritually to meet the threat of *jehad*. No one initiated or guided these discussions. No one preached the theory of secular state. The Indian Army did not believe in having political commissars. But no commissar would have been able to show greater results than those achieved in these spontaneous discussions.

CHAPTER X

JOLT AT DARHAL

The Jammu front warmed up. After the consolidation at Rajauri, the Army decided to reopen the land route to Poonch, where the heroic garrison, supplied by air, was holding out against the enemy who had managed to throw around it a ring of steel.

From Rajauri to Poonch was 45 miles. There were no roads—only pony tracks.

The Rajauri column and a column from Poonch converged at Potha on June 17, 1948. Fighting was severe. The enemy lost 122 counted killed and 280 estimated killed or wounded against the Indian Army's 1 officer and 10 soldiers killed and 1 officer and 17 soldiers wounded.

But the link-up proved temporary and operations on a more ambitious scale had to be mounted in the winter of 1948 before the route could be finally secured.

One of the places liberated by the Indian Army during the temporary link-up and which remained with it even after the link snapped, was Darhal.

Darhal was not far from Rajauri and lay at the foot of a hill which the Kumaonis who scaled it first had named Kailash. It owed its name to the accidental find on the hilltop, of the scales of a six-foot

cobra. "The snake is so big that one would think it belonged to Lord Shiva," said a young officer. "Let us name the hill Kailash then," said the colonel of the regiment. The *namkaran* ceremony was quite simple.

The crops were still standing in the fields of Darhal but there was no one to harvest them. The village was completely deserted.

Three days after the capture of Kailash, an old man laboriously climbed the hill in search of the colonel. He was well received, as all civilians were in any Indian Army piquet. He was offered a cup of tea.

The old man toyed with the cup. He would not drink the tea.

"I have been sent on behalf of the village of Darhal," he began nervously.

"Why don't you take your tea? It is getting cold," said the colonel.

The old man's hands were shaking. There was fear writ large on his face.

The colonel's mind worked quickly. He had been part of the 55,000-man force which coped with the riots in the Punjab. He had seen men paralysed by fear before.

"What is the old man thinking?" the colonel asked himself. "Why is he so afraid? He says he has come on behalf of the village of Darhal. Darhal is empty. Where are the villagers?"

Meanwhile, the old man still avoided the tea.

The colonel understood. He had another cup of tea brought, gave it to the old man. Then he silently took the old man's cup and drank its contents. The junior officers sitting around did not notice the human drama but there were tears in the old man's eyes. He was ashamed of having suspected that the tea was poisoned—yes, poisoned.

The colonel left it to the old man to resume the conversation, which he did after a long silence. "I have come to seek the protection of the Indian Army," said the old man. "The people of the village are hiding in the hills. They are starving. We wanted to go with the *Azadis* but they fled too quickly and we were left in the lurch. I know you will show us mercy. You have been so kind to an old man. May the blessings of Allah be on you !"

"Why did they choose you as their emissary?" asked the colonel.

"I volunteered," said the old man. "My wife is dead and I lost both my sons in this war. I am all alone in this world and I thought you would respect my white beard.

"Even if you killed me, what had I to lose ? So I thought."

"You are a brave old man," said the colonel.

"You saw how cowardly I was," said the old man. "Every one is afraid to die, even I who will have no widow or sons to mourn for me."

"Why did you think I would poison you?" asked the colonel. "Suppose I had wanted to kill you, I could have done so by shooting you or cutting off your head. You are alone among us. There would have been no witnesses."

"When one is afraid, one does not reason," said the old man.

"So the *Azadis* told you that we would kill all of you. And you believed them," said the colonel

"They said that the Hindu Army would kill us like rats, rape our women and young girls and drown our children. They said that the Indian Army was marching in order to avenge Rajauri."

"So you knew what happened at Rajauri. Did any one of you protest to the *Azadis* against the atrocities at Rajauri?" the colonel asked.

The old man averted his gaze and looked at the ground.

"Do not be afraid. Tell us everything," said the colonel.

"They said that they were killing the Hindus and Sikhs at Rajauri because the Dogras killed the Muslims in Jammu," said the old man. "And they said this was *jehad* sanctioned in the Holy Book. They are so clever, these lawyers. When they talked to us it sounded all right. Now I know we were wrong. I did not protest

over Rajauri because who am I to protest ? And when my sons joined the *Azadis*, I told them not to get mixed up in all this trouble. I said that we were happy under the Maharaja and the war had done us no good. But who listens to an old fool ? The *Azadis* took my sons and got them killed and they have made us poorer than we were."

"How did they impoverish you ?" asked the colonel.

"They owe something to every one of us," said the old man. "They hired our horses and made us dig trenches. They promised us high wages. To this day we have not got a pie from them."

The old man went back to his hide-out to inform the villagers that their lives and honour were safe in the hands of the Indian Army.

But the villagers were not easily satisfied. They thought that there might be a trap laid for them. But their food supply was exhausted and they had to come out.

They sent a delegation to secure confirmation of the old man's assurances. After this delegation was satisfied, other delegations followed.

It was only after a week of arduous negotiations that the villagers returned to Darhal to resume their normal avocations.

Ram Singh wondered, as he watched the rehabilitation process at work, how the Indian Army would have been received had the 'Azad Kashmiris' treated the villagers well and paid them generously for the goods and services they took. But then, if they had behaved like gentlemen, the Kaskmiri Muslim would not have looked to the Indian Army for help and the course of history would have been different. There was a kind of inevitability about everything that had happened. He sympathised with the Darhalis. They had found themselves—so it seemed to them—between the devil and the deep sea. On one side were the 'Azad Kashmiris' who exhorted them to fight for the Cause but who made them work without pay and took away part of the harvest too. If they protested against these exactions, they were told that those who were not prepared to make sacrifices for the success of the *jehad* were traitors. On the other side was the advancing Indian Army which, according to the *Azadis*, was coming to wreak vengeance and to destroy Islam. No wonder they behaved as they did.

He admired the officers who handled the situation so tactfully. One of the subtle changes that had taken place since independence was to broaden the outlook of the officers and men of the Indian Army. At the famous Red Fort trials of Indian National Army men, one of the witnesses had made a reference to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Thereupon, a high-ranking Indian Army Officer who acted as interpreter for the British

judges in the mixed court martial got confused and asked the witness to repeat the name several times. He had never heard of the Maulana ! Ram Singh would never forget the officer's question, "Abdul, who ? What is he ?" On another occasion, an Indian Officer described Mr Jawaharlal Nehru as the "Communist leader." But all that had changed after independence. Indian officers and Jawans kept in touch with what was going on in their country and served well as ambassadors of goodwill wherever they were sent, in Korea, in Indo-China, in the Sinai desert.

The importance of Darhal was that this was the first time the Indian Army entered an area in Jammu which was predominantly inhabited by Muslims and which, since the invasion, had known no other rule than *Azadi* or Pakistani rule. Pakistan, of course, did not administer the area directly but the people did see any difference between the authorities in Azad Kashmir and Pakistan. The invaders had one advantage in Jammu which they did not possess in the valley of Kashmir : in Kashmir they had committed atrocities against both Hindus and Muslims whereas in Jammu, the atrocities had been confined to Hindus. They did exploit the Muslim inhabitants but the cry of *jihad* did strike a responsive chord in their hearts. These areas in Jammu had always been cut off from the cities of the plains. The Indian Army had no means of reaching these people through any techniques

known to propaganda. It was not possible to counter-act the propaganda of Pakistan by radio or through the press for the simple reason that no newspapers reached these areas and the villagers did not know what a radio set looked like. True, the ex-service-men had seen the world outside but their world was the world of the second world war, not the postwar world. The Darhalis were thus thoroughly indoctrinated against India.

Ram Singh watched the reverse process at work. Half the battle of secularism was won when the fears of the Darhalis were overcome. The liaison officer who was accredited to the Army in that area on behalf of the civil government happened to be a Muslim. He had no difficulty in approaching the Darhalis. He explained to the people patiently the political changes that had come about since the accession of the State to India. He told them that power vested not in the hands of the Maharaja but in a popular government in which Muslims were in a majority.

Of course secularism could not be said to be firmly established as long as people thought in terms of Hindus and Muslims—in other words, as long as arguments about Hindu majorities and Muslim majorities had to be advanced to carry conviction. However, the Indian Army and the representative of the Kashmir Government had to deal with a practical problem which could not be solved by mere idealism. They used the

arguments which the Darhalis understood. Psychological warfare was just like a military battle. While the overall strategy was clear, the tactics would have to be adapted to the temporary needs of the situation. The communal situation was still delicate and there was nothing wrong if Muslims themselves took a leading part in convincing their co-religionists that the Pakistani propaganda was not based on facts.

Not far from Darhal was a unit of the Madras regiment. It happened to be a composite unit consisting of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. It was a surprise to the Darhalis to see so many Muslims in Indian Army uniform. Slowly they became convinced that the Indian Army was not a "Hindu Army" and that apart from the goodness of individual commanders, the very composition of the Army was such as to inspire confidence in the minority communities.

The Army gave the Darhalis *atta* and *dal* and other supplies. Army doctors went round with multi-vitamin tablets. Malnutrition had weakened their resistance to disease and the doctors felt that the best 'medicine' they could give the people was vitamin tablets.

Agriculture could absorb only some villagers. The others wanted alternative employment. The Indian Army gladly employed them on road-building and other jobs. The Darhalis were paid Rs. 2 or Rs. 3 a day—the

highest wages they had ever received. To ensure that they were not cheated by middle men, the Army paid them directly.

The Army was just congratulating itself on having won over the Darhalis at last when there came a complaint to the military commander that there had been a case of rape by some Indian Army men.

The "news" spread like wild fire. Once again the brows of the Darhalis were knit with the lines of suspicion and hatred.

The commander acted promptly. He declared the village out of bounds for troops. Except for minimum partrolling activity—they were still exchanging shots with the enemy daily, all men were confined to their respective bunkers on the hilltops.

Accompanied by the elders of the village, picked officers went round from house to house to inquire into the case. It ultimately turned out that the complaint had been based on rumour. No one had been raped, no girl had been seduced. There had not even been a peccadillo.

The villagers apologised to the Army and were sincerely sorry for having created all this trouble for nothing. But the incident alerted the Army to the hidden dangers. The Army was sure that the rumour had been spread by Pakistani agents whom it could not identify. The villagers had their suspicions but the Army decided not to arrest anyone on mere suspicion. It was

clear that while the areas under enemy control were not accessible to the Indian Army, the Pakistanis or 'Azad Kashmiris' had better means of communication and were not incapable of creating mischief behind the Indian Army lines.

The prompt action taken by the Army on the complaint made a powerful impression on the Darhalis. What the villagers wanted was an assurance that if a soldier misbehaved, he would be punished. They had that assurance in ample measure, though it was put to test on a false charge.

Far from getting annoyed over that incident, the military authorities decided wisely that any complaint from the villagers should be attended to immediately. Sometimes a complaint was found justified, sometimes not. But every precaution was taken to ensure that the Indian Army was not looked upon as "an army of occupation".

The Darhalis repaid their debt to the Indian Army during the winter operations for the relief of Poonch. They made not only good road-builders and porters but also ambassadors of goodwill carrying the message of the secular state wherever they went. Often the local inhabitants who hid themselves when the Indian Army advanced, sent "secret" envoys to the Darhalis for an assurance that their lives and properties would be safe. The Darhalis gave the assurance themselves without even bothering to tell the Army officers about it.

Much had been made by the enemy of the fact that the inhabitants of Poonch had led the 'insurrection' against 'Dogra rule' and were in the forefront of the struggle for 'freedom'. But a little incident convinced Ram Singh that the reasons that had led the 'Poonchi' to fight for 'freedom' were exactly the same as those which had made the Darhalis run away when the Indian Army first arrived on the scene. Among those who had been captured near Poonch by an Indian Army patrol were an old man, a *mullah*, and three boys. The General was just then visiting the front and offered to take these captives to base headquarters where a temporary camp had been established for the prisoners.

The route to base headquarters lay over a difficult mountain track. The General slowed down the pace of the journey in order not to impose too great a strain on the old man and the young boys.

After a couple of hours' walk, the party halted for tea. The prisoners were seated a little distance away from the General and his A.D.C. and the General noticed that they kept looking at him all the time instead of taking their tea. He questioned them about it. The old man said nothing but the boys were more communicative. "We are afraid you would shoot us when our backs are turned," they said. "Who told you that we would shoot you?" asked the General. "The *Azadis*," answered the boy's. "They said, 'Fight to the last man and the last

round, for if you fall into the hands of the Hindu Army, they would kill you unless you embrace Hinduism.' "

The General thought for a moment, "If I want to shoot you, why should I shoot you from behind? What prevents me from shooting you now?" After a pause, he added, "No, we won't shoot you. We shall feed you. Now have some tea."

The old man began to weep. But his tears were tears of joy, not of sorrow.

Almost all prisoners taken by the Indian Army, whether they were 'locals' or tribesmen, were surprised at the humane treatment they received. The 'locals' normally stayed in the prisoners' camp for a couple of months. Good food and kind treatment made them sensible citizens and when they were released, they went back to their villages which lay near the areas controlled by the enemy. If they wanted to rejoin the enemy, there was nothing to stop them. After all, the Indian Army did not have men to waste on policing jobs. It did not have enough people even to man the frontline properly and had to deploy its strength judiciously. A battalion of seven or eight hundred men looked impressive on paper, but the hills had a way of 'eating up' the men. But very few of the 'reclaimed' men deserted. From the day they became certain that the Indian Army would not do them any

harm, their attitude began to change towards Pakistan and the 'Azad Kashmir Government'. Some of them even volunteered to fight with the Indian Army.

However, it was a shock for Ram Singh to discover the extent to which clever anti-Indian propaganda could be successful. He had taken the liberating mission of the Indian Army for granted. He had not thought that there could be people in the State who were afraid of the would-be liberator.

CHAPTER XI

SLOW POISON

Ram Singh wondered how other countries, Britain for example, would have treated rebels who took up arms against the Government established by law in a situation similar to that faced by India in Kashmir. In an earlier age they would have hanged them first and tried them afterwards. In the modern context there would have been a fair trial but the law would have taken its course.

India could have staged such trials in Kashmir. She would have been perfectly entitled to do so under national and international law. It would have made people think a hundred times before rebelling against the secular state. But whether it was in Kashmir or the Naga hills, the Government of India looked upon the rebels not as criminals but as people who had been misled and whose affections had to be won.

Such an attitude made India's position weak internationally. But only time would show whether she had in the long run strengthened the foundations of the State or undermined it. Ram Singh himself was inclined to think that she had followed the right policy. In this, he relied on his own reactions to the

happenings in Kashmir. He had been borne on the crest of a wave of hatred for the enemy after seeing the mass graves of Rajauri and the evidence of vandalism at Baramula. But after Darhal he realised that what the Indian Army was up against was not merely the 'locals' and tribesmen and Pakistanis in and out of uniform but something more fundamental—the forces of darkness and desperation which had their roots not only in the recent past but in remote ages. It had nothing to do with the doctrine of *karma* in the religious sense. It was just the logical outcome of events and inherited attitudes of mind. India was up in Kashmir against ghosts and goblins—the same evil forces which had brought about the partition.

Kashmir, canal waters, East Pakistan refugees—all these were not the cause of Indo-Pakistan hostility. They were the outcome.

Ram Singh was reminded of a story about Webster's argument with the devil. The great American whose eloquence had been compared by admirers with that of Demosthenes and Cicero, tried to defeat the devil by a torrent of impassioned, heated, angry words. The devil still triumphed over him. Then Webster realised that the only way to conquer the devil who faced him was by conquering the devil within—the devil of anger, hatred and passion—and substituting love for hate. Thereupon the devil took to his heels, leaving Webster triumphant.

The Evil Thing that had led to the partition and that had enabled the enemy to feed the people on his side of the firing line with fantastic lies about the Indian Army and the Indian leadership—Ram Singh still-remembered some of the cartoons drawn with brush dipped in venom—could not be fought by counter-hatred. The fears of the people would have to be removed, and this could be done not by the firing squad and the executioner's axe but by gentleness and understanding.

After all, why did people, who became Indian nationals with the accession of the State to India, believe in the tales told by the enemy about the Indian Army? Was it not because of the memories of the communal riots in which not all soldiers, whether on this side of the partition line or on that side, had played an honourable role?

Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus said, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, 'Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye,' and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

While the Hindus harped on the atrocities in Rawalpindi and Sheikhpura and Lahore, the Muslims forgot those and remembered only the massacres in Amritsar, Patiala and Delhi. How were the Muslims

in Darhal or Mendhar to know that, badly shaken by the martyrdom of the Father of the Nation, India did try to cast the beam out of her own eye and was building up a secular state in which they and their children and their children's children would have the same opportunities for a good life as the majority community ?

The suspicion of one community of the other went as far back as the advent of Islam into the sub-continent by the conquest of Sind in the 8th century. The fears and suspicions of the Hindu of the Muslim had been confirmed and deepened subsequently by the sacking of the Somnath temple, the fanaticism of Aurangzeb and, in comparatively recent times, by the ambitions of Tippu Sultan.

The British had no doubt exploited these antagonisms and accentuated them by the separate electorate. But they had not created them. Long before the British entered the scene, Aurangzeb had become the exclusive hero of the Muslim and Shivaji of the Hindu. When one entered the city of Banaras, one could see a mosque allegedly built by Aurangzeb with stones secured by pulling down the holy temples of the Hindus. The mosque filled the Muslim with a sense of pride and the Hindu with a sense of shame and impotence.

But there were also periods when Hindus and Muslims had lived like brothers, helped each other and

esteemed each other. One had only to see the Sikandra at Agra to realise the depth of affection which Hindus and Muslims alike had for the memory of the great Akbar.

There were many saints respected by both communities. There were many institutions which had been built up with the contributions of Hindu and Muslim alike. There were many chapters in the history of the freedom struggle itself which could form the theoretical basis of the secular state.

Perhaps one reason why Islam began to be looked upon with suspicion by the majority community was the fact that religion got mixed up with the State. Some of the Muslim Kings and Emperors might have pursued the particular policies which they followed in the mistaken belief that Islam by itself offered a sufficient foundation for the stability of the State--in other words, they tried to use Islam for their own dynastic ends.

The attitude of the majority community towards another minority, the Christian, seemed to support this view. Where Christianity had been established long before British rule, for example in Kerala, there was no trouble between Christians and Hindus. But where Christianity had spread in the wake of British rule, for example in certain parts of Northern India, there was not the same cordiality between Christians and non-Christians. Many conversions in Northern India were

undoubtedly genuine conversions to which no one could in fairness object. However, the very fact that Christianity happened to be the religion of the alien rulers placed it at a disadvantage.

Where the rulers had been fair to all their subjects and set their face against discriminations based on religion, their memory had become part of the racial heritage. The ruler of Malerkotla, for instance, was among the rulers of the Punjab who had remonstrated with Aurangzeb against his excesses against the Sikhs, and to this day, his memory was treasured by the Sikhs. Even during the worst days of the post-partition riots, Malerkotla remained a haven of peace and goodwill. The communal conflagration which raged on all sides of Malerkotla was miraculously extinguished when the rioters reached the borders of that tiny State.

Perhaps one could argue that in States where people professed the same religion, there was no harm in religion being associated with the ruling class. But closer examination did not support this theory. Catholics and Protestants in Europe professed the same religion, namely Christianity. But the sectarian differences there proved as difficult to tackle as differences in religion in other parts of the world. Pakistan itself, at least in its western wing, was overwhelmingly Muslim. But Pakistani Muslims were divided into Shias and Sunnis and Qadianis and there had been sectarian riots which were as bad as the old Hindu-Muslim riots.

Religion in the hands of the fanatic was destructive not only of nationalism but also of culture. For over three years, Ram Singh had watched with despair the communal poison destroying the composite culture of old Hyderabad.

Before the ideology of the Muslim League gained a foothold in Hyderabad through the States Muslim League, the ruling house of the Nizam had commanded the absolute loyalty of both the Muslim minority and the Hindu majority. The Nizams used to say that Hindus and Muslims were like two eyes : the dynasty needed both and looked upon both with equal favour.

The Nizams practised what they professed. Their purse strings were loosened for the building of both mosques and temples. There were temples which received annual 'tributes' from the Nizam. The nobility consisted of both Hindus and Muslims. For a long time the Prime Minister was a Hindu.

No doubt the regime was feudal in character but that apart, Hyderabad was an example of religious tolerance. Whatever might have been the weaknesses of the feudal regime, religious fanaticism was certainly not one of them.

Even as late as 1942, 1943 and 1944, this spirit lingered on. Sarojini Naidu's ode to the Nizam might have been too complimentary but it had some basis.

Hyderabad was a city of lakes and gardens. Courteous Nawabs and graceful Begums maintained the

traditions of old world hospitality in palaces perched on hillocks. Poets gathered every evening on the banks of the Musi to recite verses in Persian and Urdu under tall cypresses. Visitors wandered around the lotus and lily ponds in the public gardens. The Osmania University was rising on the outskirts of the city, a colourful blend of Hindu and Muslim styles of architecture.

Grievances against the Government were voiced in moderate speeches and mild resolutions at small gatherings. The speakers prefaced and concluded their remarks with protestations of life-long devotion and loyalty to the House of Asaf Jah.

The press was equally discreet. When it felt like criticizing, it phrased its criticisms in such flowery language that many readers mistook them for praise.

There was supposed to be some kind of a legislature in Hyderabad. But it was so small and its members were so handpicked that the press reported only its 'decisions,' not its proceedings.

Press conferences in old Hyderabad were unlike any in the rest of India. The correspondents, clad in formal *achkan* and loose pyjamas, would rise to greet not only the Premier but also each other. A correspondent who came early for one meeting had to rise so many times that next time he chose to come a little late. But his efforts to slip into a back seat

unnoticed proved useless. He had hardly entered when the whole audience, including the President of the Nizam's Executive Council, rose to greet him. Everyone was a 'V.I.P.'

The Premier was usually followed by an attendant whose sole job was to carry his betels. Whenever the Premier gave a signal, the attendant would carefully place a betel in his mouth with silver pincers—a delicate operation which called for great skill. The Premier himself was quite modern in outlook but the attendant's only talent was to roll betels and he would have starved had he been retrenched. The Palace too would have been shocked had the Premier been so callous as to dispense with his services, so he stayed on.

True, the percentage of literacy in the State was lower than in all the surrounding States of the South. But then the Nizam's apologists could always argue that there were States in the North which were not much better off.

True, the concrete roads over which visitors vaxed eloquent did not extend into the villages. But then the villagers were not expected to have cars and the *katcha* tracks were quite adequate for the bullock-carts.

The 'radicals' argued that the State needed land reforms and some even talked of breaking up the Nizam's vast estates—one-third of the arable land of the State—at some future date. But no one took them seriously.

The average peasant in Hyderabad was, of course, poor. But then his lot was not much worse than that of peasants in other States.

There were rumours in the city that the Viceroy had snubbed the Nizam for having dared to write directly to His Majesty the King Emperor. But that did not detract from the people's respect for the Nizam. Indeed, their sympathies went out to him.

There were sometimes reports that the Nizam aspired to become the Khalif of all Islam, and that was why he had forged matrimonial alliances between his family and the family of the last Sultan of Turkey. These did not disturb the Hindus of Hyderabad. They would have been quite happy had the Nizam been exalted higher than he already was.

If old Hyderabad had been allowed to amble along at that pace, perhaps it would have emerged into the modern world gently and gracefully in spite of occasional clashes between the State Congress leaders and the authorities.

But that was not to be. The advocates of the two-nation theory were slowly securing supporters in Hyderabad. The prophets of Pakistan—which then appeared to be a wild dream—wrote learned theses about the importance of the Deccan for the "Muslim world." They evolved a new theory of sovereignty. Ignoring the firm declaration of the Viceroys that there could be only one Paramount Power in India, they proclaimed the

Nizam to be a 'sovereign'. But this 'sovereign', according to them, did not have the Divine Right of Kings. He was not the anointed of God. While the sovereignty of the State vested in the Nizam, they said, the Nizam himself was to be regarded as the symbol of the Muslim inhabitants of the State.

This strange doctrine proceeded from the fact that while they were willing to 'use' the Nizam for their own ends, they did not want to be 'used' by him for enhancing his own power and status.

For a time both sides seemed happy trying to exploit the other. But the Hindus were becoming increasingly restive. If the Nizam was to be regarded as the symbol of sovereignty of the Muslim inhabitants, where did they come in ?

Hindus and Muslims grew suspicious of each other. When forced to choose between the two, the Nizam chose his co-religionists. More and more, key jobs were reserved for the Muslims.

Meanwhile, extremism in the Muslim community had its inevitable repercussions among the Hindus. The State Congress was no longer able to canalise the energies of all elements opposed to the Nizam. Many took to communalism. The extremists demanded abandonment of Urdu as the medium of instruction in the Osmania University. Perhaps Urdu in the Deccan was a hot house plant which would not have survived in the long run. However, the manner in which its abolition

was demanded exacerbated the communal bitterness. The Muslims retorted by making their Urdu as Persianised as possible.

Composite culture could not thrive in that atmosphere. The columns of newspapers, which had been essays in moderation, were filled with the outpourings of fanatics. The sober press found it difficult to survive while communal papers sprang up like mushrooms.

As in the rest of India, the fight in Hyderabad was particularly bitter between the Nationalist Muslims and Muslims who believed in the two-nation theory of the Muslim League. The Muslim Leaguer hated the Hindu, but then he regarded him as an enemy in any case. His hatred of the Hindu was nothing compared to his hatred of the Nationalist Muslim. The Nationalist Muslim, in the eyes of the Muslim Leaguer, was not only an enemy but a traitor.

Occasionally, the pro-Muslim League elements protested that they never wanted to interfere with the 'legitimate' rights of the Hindus. But the pamphlets published by them showed Hyderabad as forming part of Pakistan. According to their concept, Pakistan would consist of the whole of undivided Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and the North-west Frontier Province in the North, the whole of undivided Bengal and the whole of Assam in the North-east and the whole of the Deccan in the South.

They said that in such a Pakistan, it would be possible to accommodate all the "hundred million Muslims" in the sub-continent. If there were isolated minority pockets left, they argued, they could be protected by the revival of the 'hostage' system, that is to say if a Muslim in India was killed, a Hindu could be killed in Pakistan.

Against the background of such pseudo-scientific arguments, the Hindus' fears grew worse while the fanatical sections of the Muslim community became more and more truculent. For a time they respected the Nizam but when they managed to make one of their nominees the President of the Nizam's Executive Council, they began to look upon the Nizam himself as their prisoner.

Darhal was very much in Ram Singh's mind when Ram Singh saw Hyderabad after the police action. Of course the sophisticated Muslims of Hyderabad could not be compared with the simple Darhalis. But on the faces of those who had joined the Razakars or sympathised with them, one could notice the same expressions of fear as one found among the Darhalis in the early days of liberation. People kept indoors. Any knock on the door gave them the creeps.

The non-Muslims were afraid too. They were afraid that the Razakars, before they were completely disarmed, would do something desperate.

When confidence returned to Hyderabad, it did not require any long speeches by the Indian leaders to convince the people about the merits of a secular state in which no one community enjoyed special rights and privileges at the expense of all others. They had learnt the lesson by bitter experience.

Hyderabad and Kashmir were two key chapters in the history of the secular State. Despite the difference in their respective backgrounds, they had the same message to convey to posterity.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING BUDDHA

The military operations undertaken in the winter of 1948 for establishing a land link with the garrison in Ladakh, at the same time as the Army in Jammu was forging the link-up with Poonch, were a resounding success. The use of tanks for the break-through at Zoji La, in terrain which every expert, Indian and British, had regarded as extremely difficult for even infantry to negotiate, was a military feat.

Those operations prevented the enemy from seizing thirty thousand square miles. What was even more important than the vastness of the territory denied to the enemy was the fact that they brought a sense of peace and security to the thirty thousand Buddhists of Ladakh who wanted nothing more in life than to pursue their centuries-old way of life undisturbed.

When one talked of Kashmir, one tended to forget Jammu which was equally important. It was, therefore no wonder that Ladakh, which lived in splendid isolation hidden by the towering Himalayan peaks, was hardly ever mentioned even in Jammu and Kashmir except in connection with the wool trade with Tibet.

But Ladakh was very much in the thoughts of the military commanders ever since the invasion began.

When the normal route to Leh was cut off, an Indian Army column was sent to Leh from Manali in East Punjab. Ram Singh met some of these soldiers later. "We wondered whether we would ever reach our destination," said one of the men who had performed that one-month journey. "For days we saw no living being. We had no means of knowing whether we were on the right track or we had lost our way in the snowcovered mountains. We pinned our faith in the maps—and in God."

While this column got through, it became obvious that it was no use relying too much on this route.

Hopes again rose high when, on May 24, 1948, Air Commodore Mehar Singh made his famous flight to Leh with Major-General K.S. Thimayya as his distinguished passenger. With the aircraft then available, it was a very dangerous route. But the Army and Air Force approved the route, thus taking a calculated risk.

For a time, the air route restored confidence in Ladakh. But nervousness returned when, on August 14, the brave garrison of Skardu was overwhelmed by the enemy by sheer weight of numbers and the victorious Pakistani commander flashed to his headquarters, "Skardu captured. All Sikhs shot, all women raped."

Therefore, when the Indian Army prised open the route to Ladakh through Kargil in the winter operations, it did so in the nick of time. If it had delayed,

the fate of Skardu would have befallen the whole of Ladakh and the subsequent "cease fire" would have left Pakistan with not half the territory of the State but two-thirds or even more.

Ladakh intrigued Ram Singh. There was magic in its very name. Only one other name had excited him so much—Shangri La. And Ladakh seemed as remote as Shangri La even from Srinagar.

He got permission to fly to Leh in an I.A.F. Dakota. But the mountains hid themselves behind an impassable cloud barrier and the Air Force was helpless.

For five days, Ram Singh and other passengers who hoped to reach Leh, went through a fruitless drill : wake up at 4, reach the air field by 5, wait till 6 at the air field, then after consultations among the air crew stay on for another couple of hours and finally return to the hotel with the news that the peaks were 'red'. The pilots went to sleep while the passengers roamed about Srinagar hoping for better luck next day.

At last the heart of the mountain melted and the Dakota was able to fly through the gap in the peaks. A more modern plane or even a pressurized Dakota could have flown in any weather but the Air Force had to make do with the tools that a poor, underdeveloped country could afford.

Large crowds—large by Ladakhi standards—gathered at the air field every time a plane arrived in the valley. They would greet the incoming visitors and wave good-bye to those returning to Srinagar.

The machines were a perpetual wonder to the Ladakhi. The only 'vehicle' they had had for centuries was the pony. There had been no wheeled vehicles of any kind, not even a cart, in Ladakh. Now they had arrived at the air age in one leap, skipping the intermediate stages.

The Dakota also brought the first wheeled vehicle to Ladakh—a jeep. So the Ladakhi had a ride in an auto before he had seen a tonga.

When the Ladakhis shouted 'jooley'—the traditional greeting, one could detect a note of curiosity in their voice: what lay beyond the mountains from where the visitors had brought the 'flying horse'?

They said that when the 'winged horse' from India landed for the first time at Leh, Ladakhis brought hay and water for it.

The people of Ladakh were a mixture of the Mongolian and the Aryan races. The 'typical Ladakhi' was short-statured. The men wore home-spun woollen cloaks, dyed usually maroon or red, and caps with large flaps which covered the neck and ears. The women usually wore black woollen jackets and coloured

woollen petticoats. The Buddhist women wore a fortune on their heads—large tonquoises sewn into the hair. The hair-do of the women of the minority communities, the Muslim and Christian, was simpler. The tonquoises must have been weighing heavily and it was very difficult to imagine any woman being comfortable with so many of them on the head. But that was the style and, well, women would always be women even on the roof of the world. Ram Singh was reminded of the discomfort some of the women of Malabar must be suffering joyously, wearing extra-heavy ear-rings which in course of time made the ears touch the shoulders.

“Walk slowly,” warned Ram Singh’s guide as he left the air field. The advice was hardly necessary. He was already breathing heavily. The high altitude was telling on him. But he was assured that the discomfort would last only for a week and that he would be able to move about normally once his lungs got accustomed to the thin air.

A week ! One talked casually about a week in Ladakh as one spoke about an hour in Delhi, about five minutes in Europe and a few seconds in the United States. It all depended on the tempo of life. Time was relative. And time did not matter in Ladakh, though the Pakistani invasion had shown that it did not stand still.

The people were simple and open-hearted. There was a look of innocence on their countenance which one found elsewhere only on the faces of little children.

Ram Singh learned to ride horses with wooden saddles. All saddles of horses in Ladakh were made of wood. Leather saddles were unknown. Like so many visitors from the plains, Ram Singh found himself in no time in an Indian Army dispensary for a cure for a sore back. The remedy was simple—application of methylated spirit.

Ram Singh's visit to Ladakh coincided with the arrival of a caravan from Sinkiang. It brought some excitement to the sleepy bazaars of Leh. For the traders from Sinkiang, Leh was like London or New York. It was the market for their wool, the famous pashmina wool which formed the staple of the shawl industry in Srinagar. They also brought Sinkiang butter. This butter, which was used by the Ladakhi for smearing his body, for mixing with his tea and as cooking medium, was about six months old by the time it was brought to Leh. The plainsman might sniff at it with disdain but the Ladakhi loved its flavour, and one of his few luxuries in life was tea mixed with Sinkiang butter with some dried nuts thrown in. The Sinkiang traders took in return for their products, Indian tea, textiles, salt and, lately, vanaspati.

The Sinkiang trader was very shrewd and was a good mixer. "We set out two months ago," one of the

members of the caravan told Ram Singh. "We were held up for a few days because of a blizzard. We lost a few animals and a few carpets which had been tied on their backs. It could have been worse. Now how do you like this carpet? It is a lovely piece. Give it to your wife and if you are not yet married, give it to your best girl friend."

"Is the colour fast?" asked Ram Singh.

The trader was quite candid about it. It was not fast. Why? Well, before the war, they used to get German dyes in the bazaars of Leh. Now only Indian dyes were sold in Leh, and Indian dyes were not as good as the German. So he could not give any guarantee for the carpet. Still it was cheap for Rs. 100. In Delhi it would cost at least five times as much.

Ram Singh was more interested in the dye than in the carpet. There was some poetic justice about it, he thought. India sold poor dyes to the Sinkiang trader who came to Leh after two months of perilous journey. Hard-working men and women of Sinkiang made beautiful carpets and dyed them with this useless dye. But then India got it back when she bought the carpets.

The hills of Ladakh looked totally different from any Ram Singh had seen elsewhere. Then he realised that they were different. It was the first time he had seen hill after hill completely bare. Not a blade of

grass grew on them. But they were not less beautiful for being bare. Indeed they were a painter's dream. One could see the hills change their colour every hour, even every few minutes. Now they would be purple, now orange, now blue, now ash-colour. One could in fact see on these hills every colour or combination of colours one could imagine.

Unfortunately, not only the mountains but even the ground tended to become bare in Ladakh. It was with the greatest difficulty that the small population managed to raise enough food—mostly *grim*, a hill barley that went into the making of the Ladakhi bread *sattu*, and local beer *chhang*. The sown areas formed little oases in a desert.

The scarcity of cultivable land accounted for some of the Ladakhi customs like polyandry, and large numbers of men and women becoming monks and nuns. Ladakh just could not afford to let all people marry and multiply.

Polyandry was abolished by the popular government in a wave of reformist zeal. But it was abolished only on paper.

The Ladakhi women enjoyed equal rights with men. And they worked harder than the men. The main burden of looking after the field and the home fell on the women. The menfolk would go with a caravan and disappear for six months. The women had to keep the home fires burning, look after the

children, tend the yak and horse, and collect the dung which was practically the only fuel available. There was great shortage of wood. The wood of the willow and poplar, the two trees that could be grown with some difficulty, was very expensive.

The Ladakhis were a very hospitable people. They were always happy to share their frugal meal with a visitor. The house might be smoky and smelling of dung but it was kept clean and white-washed every year with lime obtained from a nearby kiln.

In Ladakh, the Buddhists, Muslims and Christians lived in perfect harmony. Religion was a strictly private affair. Often the father would belong to one religion, the mother to another and the son or daughter to a third. That never interfered with domestic bliss. There were the usual taboos about food but they had solved the problem in their own way. The Muslim would get the meat of an animal slaughtered according to Islamic rites, tie a string to it in order to distinguish it from other meat and throw it into the same pot for boiling.

The Buddhist was not supposed to eat meat but when vegetables were not available, he had to yield to circumstances. But even when he had to eat meat, he tried to avoid 'killing' the animals. A piece of cloth would be tied to the nostrils of the animal which would be left in a corner, to be picked up for food later. An animal which 'died' in that way was supposed to have died a

natural death. The problem of conscience had been solved even more ingeniously with regard to fishing. The Ladakhi Buddhist would bait the hook, tie it to a string and attach it to two pieces of stone, one large and the other heavy. When the small stone moved, it indicated that a fish had been caught. The bigger stone prevented the fish from dragging the string too far. Of course there was no harm in eating a fish that had allowed itself to be caught in that manner.

Well, the followers of every religion had to make similar compromises. If Christians and Muslims took the injunctions against taking of interest literally, all the banks in Muslim and Christian countries would have to close down. Hindus were supposed not to cross the seas. If they had been too religious, Indians would never have been able to play their part in the modern world. The important thing was to preserve the spirit of religion while adapting its forms, and the spirit of Buddhism survived in Ladakh more than in any other part of the world with the exception of Tibet. People were so honest, truthful and peaceful that the Maharaja's Government had never bothered to build a jail in Ladakh. There were some policemen but their job was confined to checking the border trade. They never had to deal with murder or rioting, not even theft. For this proud achievement, the lamas or Buddhist monks deserved most of the credit.

The lamas dominated Ladakhi life. They owned almost all the property there. In times of scarcity, the

Ladakhi secured a loan of grain from the monks and returned it with interest in times of plenty. It was not a healthy state of affairs from some points of view but every family in Ladakh had a "vested interest" in lamaism ; there was no family which did not have its quota of monks and nuns who were looked after in these monasteries or nunneries.

Some day all this would change and land reforms and revolution would come to Ladakh. But Ram Singh hoped that they would come in such a way as not to disturb the good things achieved by lamaism.

The monasteries were multi-storeyed buildings which could be seen miles away. Here the lamas dedicated themselves to the worship of the Buddha. They burnt incense before giant brass and copper images of the Master, rotated their prayer wheels, chanted their hymns of peace and pored over manuscripts brought from the plains centuries ago carrying the message of the Merciful and Compassionate One.

Outside every village were large walls. At first sight a visitor would mistake them for remnants of ancient fortresses. Actually, these walls consisted of small pieces of stone which the devout had inscribed with the words "Oh God, thou jewel in the lotus" and tossed there to earn merit in the eyes of the Lord.

One felt the spirit of the Buddha permeate the very air that one breathed in Ladakh. Nowhere else

did one feel at peace with oneself and the world as much as in Ladakh.

The quiet of the countryside was occasionally broken by the tinkling of the bells of the horses and ponies in a caravan. Their music enhanced the spirit of repose and did not disturb it.

The lamas were divided into red and yellow sects. The red-hatted sect took meat and followed not only the teachings of the Buddha but also certain pre-Buddhist customs. The yellow sect was a puritanical sect. Its members subsisted on a purely vegetarian diet even in the arctic cold of the Ladakhi winter.

Dances played an important part in the religious festivals of the Buddhist monasteries. On such occasions, the monks took out 15-ft long trumpets and huge cymbals and drums to rouse the entire countryside with martial airs that recalled for a brief moment the saga of the Mongol horsemen who had swept from the Gobi desert to the borders of Hungary. These trumpet calls also served to remind one of the glory of India, which had inherited the traditions of all the religions and all the races of mankind and was now trying to fuse them into one indivisible whole under the flag of the tricolour and *dharma chakra*.

Ram Singh was entranced by the masked dances of the famous Hemis monastery. They appeared slow, very slow, at first. But as one watched them for some

time, they seemed so perfect that one wondered whether they were a dream or a reality. Every step, every movement, had been carefully rehearsed for months.

The banners fluttered in the wind, the conch-blowers blew powerful blasts from the roof-top and summoned the audience back to the courtyard after the mid-day recess. Now a new series of dances began. In one of them, the monks appeared in the old warrior dress of the Mongols, brandishing swords.

There was no doubt that the blood of generations of warriors ran in the veins of these peaceful men who sat at the feet of the Buddha. No, the Ladakhis were no pacifists. They loved peace and hated war, but when freedom was in peril, they could rise to defend their hearths and homes.

And they did rise to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Indian Army when Pakistan threatened to overrun their land. At one time the Indian Army had just a hundred men to defend the vast areas of Ladakh. If they had been left to fight alone, they would have lost the war no matter how hard the Ladakhis prayed for them in the monasteries. But the Ladakhis did not let the Army fight alone. They responded enthusiastically to the Indian Army's call to form a militia. In some actions, the Ladakhis were even more effective than the regular Army. These men, who could climb the mountains of Ladakh like goats and were inured to the effects of high altitude and the

biting cold, once spiked a Pakistani mountain gun that had been troubling the Indian Army a great deal. The commander of the regular Army unit that had been posted in that region could hardly believe it when he was first told about it, for he had pronounced only a few days earlier that the gun had been placed in an 'impregnable' spot.

The shortage of firewood made a bath a great luxury which the average Ladakhi could not afford. There was water available, for the Indus flowed through Ladakh, but the Indus water was too cold for a dip even in the summer.

The Indus ! Ram Singh had almost forgotten that this river figured prominently in the disputes between Pakistan and India. The Pakistanis argued that as the waters of the Indus were necessary for their survival in West Pakistan, they should be allowed to occupy the areas through which it flowed. That was one of the grounds on which Pakistan had claimed Kashmir. But Pakistan forgot that the Indus had its source not in the territory of Jammu and Kashmir but in Tibet which was part of People's China. Did Pakistan propose to claim Tibet also ? The Indus was not the only 'international' river in the world. How would Egypt's neighbours react if Egypt were to make similar claims in regard to the Nile ? Then there was the Danube which refused to recognise any international frontiers.

What was the Pakistani claim to Kashmir based on anyway ? Was it religion or was it the natural flow of the rivers ? It was no use mixing up too many arguments.

If States were to be based on river valleys, there would be no India or Pakistan. There would be several States in the subcontinent. There would be the State of the Indus, the State of the Jamuna, the State of the Ganges, the State of the Godavari, the State of the Krishna, the State of the Cauvery and so on. In that event, it would not matter whether the people who lived on the banks of these rivers were Hindus or Muslims.

If the Pakistani claim was based basically on religion, then too they had no right to remain in any part of Jammu and Kashmir. When the State was invaded, the Dogra Hindus resisted Pakistan. The Kashmiri Muslims, disarmed for centuries, fought Pakistan with swords and sticks while the Indian Army launched its rescue operation. The Buddhists of Ladakh fought like lions against the invader.

CHAPTER XIII

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER- REVOLUTION

'Cease fire' on January 1, 1949 left Pakistan in possession of roughly half of the State's territory of 84,471 square miles. Three million people were on this side of the 'cease fire' line under the Government established by law and a million on the other side under illegal Pakistan occupation.

The Indian Army was preparing fresh blows to fulfil the Government's directive to liberate the entire territory of the State when the guns were ordered to stop firing.

The 'cease fire' was a sledge-hammer blow to the Army's hopes. Flushed with the victories at Gurez, Zoji La and Poonch, the Army had at last become an almost invincible force. One could feel it in the way the officers carried themselves and the bearing of the Jawans. One could sniff victory in the air.

The sword that was unsheathed for the defence of Kashmir in October 1947 was now razor-sharp and was ready to cut through.

Looking back, Ram Singh could not help asking himself what would have happened if the 'cease fire' had

been refused by India or at least delayed by a few weeks or even days. Of course Pakistan privately threatened to intervene in Kashmir with all her forces if the Indian Army were to attempt any further advances but the overall balance of forces then was still in India's favour. In any event, it would have been worthwhile calling Pakistan's bluff.

In such matters, the statesmen had to take the final decision. But the advice of the soldiers could have been obtained if not taken.

The choice that would have faced India if the Pakistan Army had marched in even greater numbers into Kashmir was similar to what President Truman faced when the Chinese intervened decisively in Korea. India and the United States did not see eye to eye in many matters. But in this they had acted in an identical manner. Of course there was one big difference in the two situations: while President Truman was faced with the prospect of a world war, the Indian leadership had to be psychologically prepared only for a limited war.

Non-fulfilment of hopes inevitably led to frustration whether in an individual or in a body of men. The Army was disciplined and trained to obey the civil power and could get over the frustration because of the habit of obedience. The civilian front could not be brought under any such iron discipline, and cracks began to show.

It was easy for the leaders of the State Government to explain away their shortcomings when a war was on. In the name of patriotism one could do many things which would not be tolerated normally.

To a large extent, the seeds of frustration had been there right through. That was so in all revolutions.

Revolution was the result of dissatisfaction with the old order. But when the old order was changed, one could see two forces simultaneously at work. One force, representing the 'vested interests' protected under the old regime, longed for the 'good old days' and behaved accordingly. Another force, representing the hopes and aspirations of the revolution, groped in the dark to fulfil the promises made during the struggle.

The leaders of the new force would, to start with, command immense prestige—the prestige of success in overthrowing the old order. But often enough, the struggle which had brought them to the top left them so tired and exhausted that they were unfit for consolidating the victory. Their eyes grew dim, their hands trembled and they wanted to rest. They took their right to the privileges of office for granted. They forgot that with privilege always went responsibility. Only rarely were the leaders of a revolution fit enough to meet its compelling demands. It would be a good thing if, after the tempests and storms of a revolution, the ship of state could be handed over to an entirely new crew dedicated

to the same task but young and fresh and able enough to steer it into harbour. But this was asking for too much.

Ram Singh argued thus in a mental monologue as he thought of the tragedy of Kashmir. He could find no other arguments to explain away the phenomenon of some of the very leaders of the struggle against the Dogra regime accepting the leadership of the counter-revolution.

Someone had quipped about the revolutionaries of yesterday being the liberals of today and the conservatives of tomorrow. There was much truth in that, though it had been put cynically.

Revolutions always drew strength and sustenance from conflicting elements in society—those who were too good for the old order, the idealists, the supporters of lost causes, the honest and the incorruptible as well as those who were crafty, cunning and ambitious who were not above using the revolution for their own self-aggrandizement. Often one's motives were mixed and one or other of the objectives ultimately became dominant over the others.

The fight against the Maharaja's autocracy in Kashmir, for instance, had been supported by some out of purely communal motives. They were opposed to him merely because he was a Hindu. To achieve their ends, they joined hands with the real revolutionary elements who had nothing against the Maharaja personally but hated the system which he symbolised.

When victory was won and the Maharaja lost all his power, and later even his nominal headship of the State, one could see clearly the accentuation of the inner contradictions. The separation of wheat from chaff was a task which could be delayed only at grave peril to the State and to the entire nation.

Meanwhile, while the internal struggle gathered momentum, the administrative apparatus, already inadequate to meet the demands made upon it, was grinding to a stop. People began to say openly that the Maharaja's rule was any day preferable to popular rule.

The opportunistic elements in the administration thereupon tried to use the very frustration of the people to seize power. For a time the shock tactics paid dividends. But the problems were such that only a united leadership could have solved them. In the absence of unity, even the reforms that had been the pride not only of the State but the whole country began to recoil on the administration.

For instance, landlordism had been abolished without compensation. But one of the results of the abolition of landlordism and the simultaneous enactment of a law which practically made land inalienable was to deprive the cultivator of the only security he had to secure loans. The role that the landlord had played before, of advancing money to the cultivator in needy times, could have been played far more satisfactorily by co-operative societies but the paralysis in the

Government made any constructive work impossible. Corruption grew while bureaucracy multiplied, with each faction bringing into the administration its own supporters.

Of course disillusionment with popular rule was not peculiar to Kashmir. It extended to most of the other six hundred States. Expectations from popular rule had been pitched so high that disillusionment was inevitable. Ram Singh recalled his visit to a tiny State in the North. One could drive across the length and breadth of the State in a jeep in half an hour. It had one of the most beautiful marble palaces in India. It must have cost a few crores of rupees. The furniture in the palace was fit to be displayed in any art exhibition. Every table was a sample of the best inlay work. The Maharaja himself was rarely to be found in the State. He preferred to spend his time in the French Riviera.

Such high living must have cost the Maharaja a fortune. It did. One of the senior financial officers sent to the State by the States Ministry of the Government of India found that out of the State's revenue of Rs. 1.25 crores, the Maharaja's personal expenditure amounted to over Rs. 75 lakhs a year, apart from his 'private account'. In addition to the State exchequer, he could draw on the income from his vast private estates and private investments.

There had been public criticism of such waste of public funds, and when the State was integrated after independence, the people warmly welcomed the change.

But after some time, the people began to complain that the change had been for the worse, not for the better. With the shifting of Government offices from the tiny State to the new capital, employment shrank locally. The officers who moved complained that the accommodation provided for them by the new Government was much worse than what they had back at home. Those who held small jobs found that the allowances they received did not compensate for the higher cost of living. They were very much dissatisfied.

Any change would temporarily involve dislocation. But even after making allowance for it, the people found that administrative efficiency had definitely suffered after the change. Letters to the new capital were hardly answered. For every permit one had to go to the new capital.

Before integration, the Maharaja, whenever he found time to visit his State, used to sit in front of his palace and dispose of petitions and applications personally. Justice was quick. After the change, justice was slow. The appeal courts were also far away.

At first, the people's dissatisfaction with the new order expressed itself in comments such as this : "True, things were not too good before but they were better than they are today."

Gradually, the Maharaja became a hero. Whatever he did was right and whatever his successors did

was wrong. When the Maharaja stood for election against the candidate of the 'popular' party, he secured an overwhelming majority.

Even the Maharaja's squandermania was justified by his new-found admirers. "The palace cost a lot no doubt," they began to say, "but where else do you find such wonderful buildings?" Our Maharaja has taste," said some. "Look at our new rulers. What have they built?" Others said, "The Maharaja built fine roads. The new Government does not care even to maintain them properly."

This was no isolated instance.

The reasons given for dislike of the new regime and expressing admiration for the old varied with the individual. In some cases they were quixotic. There was the driver in one Indian State. "When I used to drive the Maharaja round," the driver told Ram Singh, "he used to get angry if I went less than sixty miles an hour. Once I discovered I had averaged fifty miles an hour and he threatened to sack me. Even the Maharaja's sister could stand forty. Now, phew! My Minister who bought the car from the Maharaja—some say it was a bribe—gets nervous if I exceed twentyfive miles an hour. 'Go slow, go slow,' he shouts. I felt like asking him, 'Why don't you buy a bullock cart? Why do you need a car?'"

That driver's vested interest in Maharaja's rule was speed—nothing more and nothing less.

In every State there was a minority which had benefited by the old order. There were the fashionable tailors who used to get large orders from the Palace. There were the jewellers whose services used to be in great demand. There were officials who used to get special presents from the Maharaja on his birthday.

Administration was a difficult matter even normally. When it was placed in the hands of those whose only qualification was that they had been in the forefront of every agitation and demonstration, it was found that there was a great deal of difference between the kind of courage needed to keep the flag flying in the face of a lathi charge and the courage required to say 'No' to an old comrade who applied for a permit to which he was not entitled

To control the administration, one needed a certain temperament. Like any other body of men, the services consisted of both good and bad men. If due care was not taken, Ministers would find themselves relying more and more on the corrupt and sycophant sections of the administration and not on the honest official who conscientiously discharged his duty.

Whether it was in the old Indian States or in what used to be British India, the services had been accustomed in the past to exercising their authority in a limited sphere, mostly of law and order. The increased demands made on them in a welfare State called for a new outlook. They could adjust themselves, but

only if they were helped to do so by popular Ministers who had to serve as a link between the administration and the people. Countries like the United Kingdom had succeeded after centuries of trial and error. Rightly or wrongly, India would be judged by U.K. standards and not by the standards of countries which were satisfied with lower standards.

It was no use telling the people, whether in Kashmir or in the rest of India, that their condition had really improved after independence. Of course one could statistically prove that great advances had been made. One could point with pride to the increase in the expectation of life, textile production, output of coal and cement and per capita consumption of food-grains and sugar and prove that the people had a higher standard of living than at any time in history. But the average man had his own standards of judging things. There would be people who would keep saying, "When we were young, we used to get fifteen seers of rice for a rupee. Now-a-days it is difficult to get one seer for a rupee." An economist could argue that cheap rice by itself was no indication of general prosperity. The standard of living would have to be computed in terms of real income.

But when one dealt with the people who had the right to vote, facts were less important than beliefs.

Kashmir was under a double handicap. Not only were the rulers different but even the men manning the

services. While in the rest of India the old officials formed a hard core of the expanding bureaucracy and provided some kind of a ballast, in Kashmir the old administrators were replaced overnight by young politicians. They were too inexperienced and too proud to listen to those who knew better. Again, while the Opposition parties helped to expose and thus to correct the shortcomings of the administration in the rest of India, the emergency atmosphere did not provide proper soil for the development of Opposition parties on the right lines in Kashmir. To some extent it was the fault of the Opposition parties themselves. Democracy was built on certain assumptions. One had to accept the broad basis of the State in order to be allowed to enjoy the privileges of citizenship. Too often in Kashmir, the opposition came from elements which were not prepared to play the role of a constitutional opposition. Democracy could flower only in an atmosphere free from fear. The threats of *jehad* from across the border did not contribute to the restoration of normalcy. On the other hand, the Government too yielded occasionally to the temptation of using the emergency to suppress even legitimate opposition.

Under such artificial conditions, it was not surprising that some of the disillusioned and disappointed leaders who were losing their hold on the public succumbed to the lure of escapist or 'adventurist' solutions.

Perhaps when they first advanced these solutions, they had merely intended to divert the attention of the masses from their immediate problems and nothing more. But once they got into the bog, they got stuck there. Every effort to pull themselves out only made them sink deeper.

Of all the escapist solutions, the most conspicuous was plebiscite. When the word 'plebiscite' was first used by the Government of India, it was used in a particular context. The aggression of Pakistan was admitted by the U.N. Commission. The need to secure rapid vacation of Pakistani aggression also seemed to have been acknowledged by the U.N. There was no question of letting the aggressor consolidate the gains of aggression. A plebiscite was thought of against the background of speedy restoration of the full authority of the legally constituted Government over the entire territory of India in Kashmir.

But Pakistan did not withdraw from the areas she illegally occupied. She even began to impose conditions for carrying out her obligations to the international community.

The idea of plebiscite had been killed by the Pakistani attitude.

However, its revival by a section of the Kashmiri leadership was fraught with danger. It was taken advantage of by the minority which had never accepted the ideology of the National Conference and the

fundamental tenets of the constitution, namely, democracy and secularism.

The slogan also appealed to those whose vision of independence even during the struggle against the Maharaja had been confined to independence for their tiny patch of land between Banihal and Baramula. Plebiscite for them meant a chance to let loose the forces of disintegration which had been checked by Sardar Patel.

This inevitably alarmed the majority of the National Conference leaders who wanted to guard the fruits of the freedom struggle, who wished to create conditions in which the defects in the administration could be remedied and the State placed on the path to progress and prosperity. They denounced the escapists. Clashes, demonstrations and firings, arrests and detentions followed.

Liquidations, violent or non-violent, were always painful. But when one climbed the steep trail of revolution, one had no use for the faint of heart, for the weak-willed, for those beset with doubts. Sometimes, in the heat and passion of the moment, the wrong people, the innocent people, also got liquidated with the guilty. No one could justify that. But a revolution could in the last analysis be judged only against the vast canvas of history. One could not judge it properly with the aid of a microscope.

One thing emerged from all the strains and tensions in Kashmir. The accession of the State to India was accepted by the overwhelming majority of the people as inviolable. Whatever difficulties remained to be solved, would have to be solved internally. Kashmir was no more a plaything of international politics. Kashmiris refused to be pawns.

It was also clear that the slogan of plebiscite was futile. The people of Kashmir had in two general elections declared their firm resolve to remain in the vast family of diverse races and peoples that constituted the Indian Union. No leader, however eminent, could unsettle settled facts.

CHAPTER XIV

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION

Kashmir had the distinction of being the only trilingual State in India. States reorganisation had still left a couple of bilingual States but Kashmir was the sole remaining trilingual State.

Hyderabad could have been another— and bigger— trilingual State. But its ruler had failed to utilise the opportunities that had been offered to him by the Indian leadership.

Of course there was one vital difference between Kashmir and Hyderabad, apart from their different political and historical backgrounds. When Hyderabad was broken up, its Telugu-speaking, Kanarese-speaking and Marathi-speaking districts could be attached without any difficulty to the areas of Andhra, Mysore and Bombay. Kashmir's position was different. Even if it could be argued that the Hindu part of Jammu could be attached to the Indian Punjab and the Muslim part of Jammu to West Pakistan, the Kashmir valley and Ladakh would remain. They could not be attached to any linguistic State in India or Pakistan. Even though Pakistan claimed Kashmir, it could not point to any part of Pakistan where Kashmiri was the mother tongue of the people.

The only contiguous area which had linguistic and cultural affinities with Ladakh was Tibet. But Tibet was in China.

Kashmir thus faced a two-fold problem—first, integration of the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and, secondly, integration of the State with the rest of the Indian Union.

In the Kashmir valley, the mountains that ringed the valley tended to produce an insular feeling among the people. Even people who stood for union with India sometimes talked of Kashmir as 'country' instead of 'State' or 'Province'. Isolationism came naturally to any people cut off for long periods from the rest of the world. The Banihal Pass had been not only a natural barrier but also an emotional impediment. The Jawahar tunnel had opened up the road for traffic throughout the year. Thanks to the boring of the tunnel, the valley did not have to stock up provisions for the winter months in the summer. But it would take some time to remove the psychological obstacles to integration. The mountains could be blasted with dynamite and gun cotton. The blasting away of the barriers of the mind was much more difficult.

Ram Singh thought that that was why, when the cry of independence for the valley was raised, it had some appeal—at any rate, it did not produce any immediate protests. The protests came only when the real significance of the cry slowly sank into the minds of the politically alert.

The men who were propagating the idea of independence for the valley—a little Sheikhdome—would straightaway reject any suggestion for dividing up the State into three independent States based on language. “How can little Jammu be independent?” they would ask. Independence for Ladakh was, of course, out of question. But when it came to the little valley of Kashmir, they somehow or other hugged the delusion that Kashmir could be a Switzerland of Asia, whose independence would be guaranteed by both India and Pakistan. But that was to beg the question. If Pakistan had so much goodwill for Kashmir, why did she invade Kashmir in the first instance and raise all this pother?

Of course the process of emotional integration had been difficult all over the world and India was no exception. Each country had solved it in its own way and India would have to work out her own solution.

Among the democratic countries, the United States provided the finest example of integration of people with different cultures and backgrounds. The Norwegian, the Dane, the Englishman, the German, the Finn, the Swede, the Russian, the Austrian, the Irishman and the Italian—all worshipped the Statue of Liberty and saluted the star-spangled banner once they were in the New World. Slowly the different European races shed their angularities and were absorbed in the land of their adoption. The main uniting factor in the United States appeared to be the English language.

But in India, while one might attempt to have an official language of the Union, it was impossible to have a common language for all the people. Even the official language was running into difficulties. In any case, even the strongest supporters of Hindi conceded that the great regional languages would have to be given full freedom of growth.

Conditions in the United States did not apply to India. And even in the United States, the problem of the Negro, who spoke English just like the White, remained unsolved. It had sparked a civil war and the story of Little Rock illustrated the difficulties that still remained. The Negro problem in the United States should actually have proved less intractable than India's Harijan problem because while the Negro problem involved only a question of getting over colour prejudice, the Harijan problem was complicated by religious and pseudo-religious factors.

The United Kingdom was a good example of integration of English, Scottish and Welsh people. But she had failed in Ireland.

India had perhaps more to learn from Switzerland than from the more powerful democracies. There, in the land of William Tell, people of German, French and Italian origin had kept their individuality while at the same time evolving a common nationality. However, how much could one learn about the building of a battleship by studying the construction of a motor

boat ? India's population and her problems were too vast to bear any comparison with those of Switzerland.

In some respects, India's problems could be compared to those of the Soviet Union. Like India, the Soviet Union consisted of people of many races and religions. In fact she had not had even the bond of cultural unity which had been strong in India from time immemorial. And her territory was far vaster than that of India, though her population was only half that of India. The climate and terrain varied from region to region in the Soviet Union to an even greater extent than in the subcontinent of India.

Russia had welded her vast territory and diverse peoples into a monolithic unity on the basis of an ideology. But India did not accept that ideology. She had deliberately chosen the path of democracy because she firmly believed that democracy was the best form of Government known to mankind.

What the Soviet Union had achieved through communism, India was trying to achieve through democratic means. Communism had enabled the Soviet Union to preserve her territorial integrity and to conquer the backwardness of centuries in a matter of decades. India had to do the same thing while preserving the freedoms which she held sacred.

While under communism the ruling class could make the people undergo sacrifices by decree, in a democracy the Government had to go through five-year

tests of popularity. What was good was not necessarily popular. Sometimes the goodness and popularity of a measure were in inverse proportion. Of course even communists had to draw the line somewhere: if they drove the people beyond a certain point of endurance, they would be overthrown. But that kind of 'check' could not be compared with the process of free elections. So long as the dozen or so powerful men who wielded power in a communist State—or for that matter in any totalitarian State—were agreed that their course of action was right, they could go ahead. If its advantages became evident before the dissatisfaction of the people began to gather momentum and blow up, they had nothing to fear and everything to gain. In a democracy on the other hand immediate reactions of the people were as important as long-term reactions.

Ram Singh read many learned tomes about the basis of nationhood but did not find the answer. Ultimately they all boiled down to only one thing: if a people felt that they were a nation, they were one. Otherwise they were not.

Nationalism was not based on race, language or religion. It was based on a 'sense of belonging' to a particular territory. But the mere herding together of a people in a territory did not bring it about. The unification of India under the Crown was one of the glories of British Imperialism—so said British historians. But when the moment came for the British to quit, they

had to divide and quit. The fabric of unity did not outlast them.

The partition of India was as much a blow to British statesmanship as it was to Indian nationalism. There might have been—indeed there were—individual Britons who had worked actively for destroying Indian unity. But the goal of the British Government as such was always to bring the whole subcontinent under one flag.

What was the claim that Kashmir's accession to the Indian Union was irrevocable based on? With Indian Army aid the people of Kashmir had survived the invasion, and the fact of survival was in itself a great bond. But that was not all. Kashmir, together with the other States of the Union, was participating in the great adventure of building up the country, in the common effort to conquer poverty and squalor, in the attempt to raise India to the level of the most advanced countries of the world.

The Jawahar tunnel was the most spectacular achievement of the joint effort. But there was also other evidence. The tourist traffic was once again flourishing. It was an ever-expanding business. The more the country developed, the more would be the attraction of Kashmir as a holiday resort and the more the ability of the people to spend there. Kashmir would really become the Switzerland of Asia, though not in the sense that some of the disgruntled politicians meant it. Kashmir already owned a larger fleet of motor vehicles than it had

ever done before. Its capacity to meet the needs of the Kashmiris and the tourists was increasing every year. Despite maldistribution of the extra income generated, the wage level in Kashmir was the highest in India.

Kashmir was the only State in the Indian Union where education was free at all stages, including college. Time was when, except for a handful of people, the Kashmiris were just hewers of wood and drawers of water. The best paid administrators used to come from outside the State.

Now all that was changing. The exchange of administrators had become a two-way traffic with the integration of the services. More and more Kashmiris were obtaining employment outside as engineers, doctors, administrators and educationists and in commerce and industry.

There was still much to be done to abolish the grinding poverty of the people and to solve the problem of unemployment, which would worsen with the spread of education. A boatman's son used to become a boatman automatically. But now, after going through college, he insisted on being given a 'more respectable' job. But new vistas had been opened and it was possible to plan ahead.

Slowly, pride in the country was being superimposed on parochial loyalties. This was illustrated by the attitude of the people towards the tricolour. As late as the middle of 1953, the red flag was used to a greater

extent at ceremonials than the tricolour. The tricolour was never frowned upon in Kashmir but somehow it was not much in evidence. But at the mass meeting held in the heart of Srinagar and addressed by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed on Republic Day 1958, there were more tricolours than red flags. The tricolour had come to stay. The red flag would still be there but only as a colourful relic of the past—like the 'national costume' that Finnish girls wore on festive days.

Formerly, only Kashmiri Pandits were to be seen in other parts of the country. The Kashmiri Muslims remained at home except for the hawkers and migrant labour. In due course, more Kashmiri Muslims were bound to be employed outside Kashmir than inside—like in Kerala, where large numbers of villages appeared deserted, all the young men having gone to cities like Bombay and Delhi and foreign countries like Malaya and Burma in search of employment. When that happened, it would help more than anything else in breaking the shell of isolation and removing the natural antagonisms between hill-folk and people from the plains.

Kashmir had been slower than other Indian States in accepting the Union's jurisdiction over subjects other than those of defence, external affairs and communications—the three subjects listed in the instrument of accession. This had been so for various reasons, among them the fact that Kashmir, unlike other States, had been

the subject of long debates in the Security Council. These arguments and counter-arguments retarded the normalisation of the relationship between the Centre and the State.

However, with the historic decision of the Constituent Assembly of Kashmir making the accession to India irrevocable, the points of difference between the position of Kashmir and the position of other States of the Union were being eliminated one by one—not by force but by a process of mutual discussion and often on the initiative of the State Government itself.

The measures of integration were as much to the benefit of the people of Kashmir as the people of the rest of India. Before customs union, for instance, the people of the State had to pay more for consumer goods than those in the rest of India. With the abolition of the customs barrier, the extra impost was withdrawn. Traders within and outside the State were able to earn more profits as a result of the larger turn-over but the benefit to the common man in Kashmir was even more.

Income-tax had been extended to the State. The State would thus contribute to the Central pool. But the financial advantages that the State derived from the Centre ran into crores compared to the few thousands of rupees that Kashmiris would pay by way of income-tax and super-tax.

The extension of the Supreme Court's jurisdiction to the State was another achievement of the administration

of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. Here again, this step served the interests of the people of the State while contributing to the unity of the nation. The Supreme Court did not take away anything. It only extended the area of freedom and fundamental rights.

Indeed, the cry of the 'constitutional opposition,' as opposed to the 'subversive opposition,' was to speed up the integration, not to slow it down. That by itself showed what a long distance the State had covered since October 1947 when the Maharaja hesitantly signed the instrument of accession.

The Indian Union was based on consent and not on coercion. Occasionally voices of discord might be heard in different corners of the country, but in a real crisis these voices were always drowned in the full-throated cry of unity. Kashmir was no exception.

Indian nationalism was tested in Kashmir more than in any other part of India. When India decided to respond to Kashmir's appeal and send troops in October 1947, the communal conflagration had not yet died down in vast areas of India and Pakistan. People even in high places were asking in India "Why should we waste our men and money in Kashmir? What guarantee is there that the Kashmiri Muslim will be loyal to India? Well, the Kashmiri Muslim demonstrated his loyalty to the secular State by fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Indian Army and again by accepting the decisions of the Constituent Assembly even when some of his leaders advised him against it.

Every revolution had to go through fire. But history had again and again shown that revolutions could not be put down by bullets.

When Russia threw off the Tsarist yoke, she had to fight a civil war and meet foreign intervention before the world would acknowledge the right of the Soviet Union to exist.

China emerged as a great power only after the Korean war.

The history of other revolutions had been similar.

India had hoped that after paying the price of partition, she could settle down to the solution of the urgent problems of her people. But that hope was not realised. The civil war which she had hoped to avoid by conceding Pakistan came in the shape of the communal riots. Hardly had the riots ended when she had to meet the invasion of Kashmir. When the troops landed in Srinagar, they were inexperienced—at least their officers were. But like the Red Army of the Soviet Union and the armies of the French Revolution, the Indian Army emerged all the stronger for the premature trial of strength.

With the passage of time, Kashmir's role as the 'guarantor' of India's secular State was becoming more and more evident to both the majority community and the minority communities in India. In the early years of the struggle in Kashmir, Indian Muslims outside the State were too dazed by the riots to take active

interest in Kashmir. Today the Indian Muslim outside Kashmir reacted angrily when anyone in Kashmir sought to undermine Kashmir's relationship with India. Any leader within Kashmir, be he a Hindu or a Muslim, who challenged the accession of Kashmir to India had to reckon with the opposition not only of the Muslims—without doubt the great majority of them—in Kashmir but the entire Muslim community in the rest of India. Not only Nationalist Muslims who had always believed in the Congress ideology of secularism but even the leaders of the Indian Union Muslim League endorsed the State's accession to India. In the present context the stand of the League did not matter but its changed attitude showed how strong Indian Muslim opinion was on the subject.

One of the developments in the country since October 1947 was that Kashmir had become a non-controversial issue in regard to the basic aspects. All parties—the Congress, the Communist, the Praja Socialist, the Socialist, the Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha—praised the Government of Kashmir for putting down the threat to the accession. There might be differences of opinion about the action taken against a particular leader but that was because some parties felt that the situation could have been met even if the Government had decided to ignore his activities. On fundamentals all parties in the country were one.

One had only to talk to some of the young National Conference workers and officers of the police, the

militia and the services generally to realise how determined the State was to meet any threat that might come across the border. The complete integration of the State with India was no longer an objective: it was as much a reality as the accession. Any forcible attempt to undo it would result in a conflict which would not be confined to the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent.

CHAPTER XV

ON BEING REASONABLE

Pakistan had won the first round in the propaganda battle for winning over 'world' (Western) opinion. But as President Roosevelt said about Pearl Harbour, what mattered in war was not who won the first round but who won the last.

The results of the first round were no doubt depressing. Ram Singh was shocked by the extent of ignorance abroad about the basis of the Indian case, let alone the justice of it.

Of course the average person abroad, like the average citizen of India, was not expected to know much about other countries. He was too immersed in his own day-to-day problems of bread and butter to care very much for what happened in some far corner of the world. His knowledge of Kashmir was inevitably based on a hasty perusal of brief extracts of the arguments in the Security Council which appeared in his favourite paper—if at all—and oversimplified articles and sketches by 'experts' on Kashmir. It was also influenced to some extent by personal conversations with Indians and Pakistanis abroad, students, journalists and businessmen more than officials.

There was, Ram Singh thought, one fundamental difference between the attitude of the average Indian abroad and that of the average Pakistani abroad. The Pakistani came out strongly in support of his Government's policies on Kashmir and gave the impression that Kashmir was for him a matter of life and death. If anyone said anything in favour of India in company, he would take offence and create a scene. These tactics were sometimes crude and 'non-U' but quite effective. The Indian on the other hand tended to view criticism of his Government with philosophical detachment. He was interested more in his own work for which he was abroad. He was quite content to leave the defence of Kashmir in the hands of Mr. Nehru and Mr. Krishna Menon, Pandit Pant and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. Perhaps this stemmed from confidence in his leadership, in his Army and people, but his attitude was misunderstood by the foreigner as indifference to the fate of Kashmir. So much so that many believed that only Mr Nehru was concerned over Kashmir and if he was prepared for a 'reasonable' solution, it would go through.

The attitude of the Indian was partly due to his psychological make-up. It was not easy to rouse him over any cause easily. But, as the British had learnt in many a *satyagraha* movement, once roused, he was a pillar of fire. It was this trait in him, his ability to suffer, that had enabled Mahatma Gandhi to forge the weapon of non-violent resistance or *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* could not be offered by a weakling. The

ability to remain in the field under lathi blows and a hail of bullets without thought of retaliation called for sheer cold courage, in fact greater courage than that required of a soldier who was trained to give blow for blow.

Perhaps the Indian suffered from the drag of centuries when he was asked to make up his mind quickly. But if this prevented him from taking lightening decisions and made him look before he would leap, it also gave him enormous reserves of strength which enabled him to stand knocks and shocks which would have broken others.

All 'ancient' peoples had that quality of tenacity, doggedness and patience. No nation except Israel, for instance, could have survived the persecution of centuries and yet have enough reserves of strength left to found Israel and to defend it against a hostile Arab world. Only an ancient nation like China could have checked the most advanced armies of the West by sheer weight of numbers after all the blood-letting of the war against the Japanese and civil war.

Similarly, it was difficult to imagine any country except India playing such a vital role in international affairs after centuries of bondage. When India became independent, she had no foreign service to speak of, no diplomatic corps, no propaganda machinery. And yet, her views were heard with attention in all capitals of the globe and, what was more, she was respected as much in London as in Moscow.

When he discussed Kashmir with a foreigner, Ram Singh found that the foreigner usually was quite unaware of the two-nation theory. The foreigner did not know that while the Muslim League had fought for the division of India on the ground that Hindus and Muslims could not live in the same country, India had conceded Pakistan without accepting the two-nation theory and, indeed, resisting it all the time. He did not realise that while there were no Hindus in West Pakistan except a few who were needed by the Pakistanis for running their municipal services, and Hindus were still migrating to India from East Bengal in a never-ending stream, India had forty million Muslims who did not want to go to Pakistan.

The foreigner did not know that while Pakistan was building up an Islamic State, where the head of State had under the constitution to profess the Islamic faith, India was building up a secular State with opportunities to all communities not only to profess their faith but to propagate it.

No, it was not strictly correct to say that the foreigner did not know anything about the two-nation theory. Somehow he got the impression that all Hindus in the sub-continent had been given India as their State and all Muslims regarded Pakistan as their homeland.

It would be easy enough to blame the Government of India's information and publicity machinery for the ignorance of the foreigner about India's case. Perhaps

the Pakistani officials had shown more zeal than the Indian. But that could not be the only reason. Basically, Pakistanis put forward what looked like a 'simple case' to a detached observer. India's case was necessarily more complex.

The Pakistani said, "India was divided on communal lines. We have got all the Muslim areas of undivided India inside Pakistan. Only Kashmir is left out. Till we get Kashmir, Pakistan is incomplete."

The Indian, in his reply, would have to remind the foreigner of Pakistan's 'original sin' in Kashmir, the unprovoked aggression, of the secular basis of the entire national movement in India, of the danger to the unity and integrity of India if the Pakistani arguments were conceded.

Pakistan had one advantage over India in the Kashmir 'dispute'—apart from the 'simplicity' of her case, she could rely on the Foreign Offices of countries in the West to convert their public opinion in her favour.

The officials of these Foreign Offices were highly talented. They were not hostile to India. When their Governments took a particular 'line' on any issue, theirs was the job to rationalise it and to find reasons to justify it. If the 'line' changed, they would supply fresh facts and find fresh arguments in favour of the change.

It so happened that most Western countries, with no stake in Kashmir, adopted a line which was aimed

at postponing consideration of the issue of aggression. And the officials of the Foreign Offices of these countries were, therefore, interested in seeing to it that Indian public relations officials and Indian propagandists did not 'spoil' their line. Under these circumstances, consciously or unconsciously they tended in their briefings and hand-outs and background notes for their national press, to support Pakistan as against India.

This line of thought made Ram Singh examine the possible reasons that weighed with the men who wrote against India in the foreign press. He became convinced after meeting many of them that they, like the Foreign Office officials, had no particular prejudice against India. If they wrote against India, it was because they tended to accept on trust whatever their officials told them. It seemed to him that the influence of Government over the foreign press was much greater than those connected with the foreign press would admit. It appeared to him that the influence of the officials over the press in India was considerably less than in the advanced countries of the West despite the fact that the Indian press was financially much worse off than the foreign press and depended more on Government advertisements than the foreign press did. This was because during the struggle for freedom, the Indian press instinctively distrusted everything that emanated from official quarters. This habit of suspicion did not disappear after independence because, for one thing, the officials were the same as before : only

the masters had changed. In the democratic countries of the West on the other hand, there was no such mutual suspicion. While in India the average reporter would accept a Government statement only if he could not find arguments for rejecting it, in the countries of the West the average reporter accepted the Government statement as true till it was subsequently proved false. The mutual trust in the West was, of course, based on the fact that in most cases the reporter found by experience that his Government had not let him down. But this very trust gave the Government an enormous influence over the press on matters which did not affect any vital interests of their own people. It was common in Western countries for a leader-writer to telephone a Foreign Office official for background information over happenings in a remote corner of the world. It was true that the leader-writer could listen to the official for two hours and write something totally different from what the official would have liked him to do. But the chances were that not knowing the facts himself, the leader-writer would be influenced by the expert.

Ram Singh met some of the 'experts' on Kashmir whose arguments India had to meet in every meeting of the Security Council. He thoroughly enjoyed the exchange of views he had with them.

One thing which Indian officials could learn from Western experts was the manner in which they phrased their arguments and put them across. Apart from

their poise and precision of speech, what struck him most was the way they could take hard knocks without batting an eye-lid and proceed to explain the 'reasonableness' of their Government's stand—whatever it happened to be at the moment. One could not meet an official abroad, as one could in India, who would say, "This is the Government stand, though personally....."

After listening for half an hour to the 'reasonable' arguments of the Foreign Office expert in one of the Western capitals, Ram Singh asked, "Now what about Pakistan's aggression? We have talked about everything except that."

Yes, this business of aggression being bypassed was India's basic trouble in the Security Council. After some time, people abroad even began to feel that India was the aggressor and Pakistan was the defender. Indeed Ram Singh came across in a well-known Western reference book something to the effect, "Muslim tribesmen from Pakistan invaded Kashmir when the Hindu Maharaja acceded to India. Thereupon India offered to hold a plebiscite under international auspices and India and Pakistan agreed to a 'cease fire.' "

In other words, according to this reference book, the Maharaja's accession came first and the invasion was provoked by the accession !

It was against this background that he pleaded with the Foreign Office expert, "I shall accept any arguments you advance, provided you begin them

with the sentence, 'Pakistan invaded Kashmir in defiance of all canons of international law and morality. Thereupon the State appealed to India for protection and acceded to India'."

"Let us be practical," protested the official. "Whatever might have been the origin of the dispute it is obvious that no Pakistan Government will last a day if it agreed at this stage to vacate Kashmir without any firm assurances about plebiscite. They are prepared for anything provided you agree to a plebiscite."

"Why are you worried about the fate of the Pakistan Government?" asked Ram Singh. "And do you think any Indian Government, would last a day if it were to drop the charge of aggression and agree to a plebiscite 'at this stage,' as you put it?"

"I am not so sure about that," beamed the official. "I think you are fortunate in having a strong Government which can mould public opinion,"

True, compared to many other countries, India had a strong Government, mused Ram Singh. And yet, what was the strength of her leadership? Was not that strength based on the fact that it reflected the feelings of the Indian people? It could, of course, mould public opinion to some extent but not if it went too much against the current. The riots of States reorganisation proved conclusively the limitations of the leadership. All the so-called strength and all the prestige of the leadership was not adequate to make

people who felt betrayed, accept the bilingual solution in Bombay. And why should the leadership betray the people and hand over Kashmir to Pakistan ?

Ram Singh told the official, "Surely, you don't mean to suggest that the Government of India feels less strongly about Kashmir than the Government of Pakistan ?"

The official retorted, "If you did, why did you take so many years to express your feelings ? If you really felt that aggression was the only issue, why on earth did you utter the word plebiscite ? Is it proper for you to accuse us now if we took your earlier stand seriously ?"

"Your complaint simply boils down to this : that we behaved like reasonable people even in the face of grave provocation," said Ram Singh. "We said: 'We want you to secure the vacation of aggression.' But finding that the members of the Security Council were interested in discussing all kinds of issues in addition to the issue of aggression, we said, 'Well, we have explained to you our stand. But let us see where your arguments lead to.' And we discussed plebiscite, quantum of forces to be kept by us at various stages and so on. Then, finding that our attitude was being misunderstood, we decided to stick to our complaint and not to discuss any extraneous issues. Instead of becoming 'unreasonable,' I would say that we tried to restore perspectives."

At such times, Ram Singh did feel that it was no use blaming the foreign press or the Foreign Offices of

other countries. How were they to know the Indian feeling if his countrymen, officials and non-officials, kept silent? Even the best of cases could be lost through weak advocacy.

“Are you sure that you have never had any doubts about the wisdom of the accession?” asked the official.

Ram Singh replied, “Perhaps no people have as many doubts over anything as the people of India. They are perpetually in doubt. But their doubts have nothing to do with the justice or otherwise of a cause. They are as much concerned over justice as with the consequences of victory.” Ram Singh continued in an introspective mood, “Don’t forget that despite their conviction that they were right, the Pandavas needed Krishna’s persuasion to make them fight at Kurukshetra. Perhaps it was in that spirit that the Government of India debated for two days whether or not they should respond to Kashmir’s appeal for help. They went in only when they were convinced that the alternative was disaster not only for Kashmir but for India. It would have meant the end of all their hopes and dreams for the future. The communal fire had just been quenched with great difficulty in Northern India. They could not afford to see it rekindled.”

Ram Singh asked the official, “Don’t you have your doubts about your own Kashmir policy?”

“I concede it has not been effective and that sometimes makes me wonder whether any other course is open

to us," said the official. "But I don't see what else we could have done or can do."

"Our aim all along," the official claimed, "has been to avoid taking sides. Sometimes we are misunderstood by one side and sometimes by the other. But we have a responsibility as a member of the Security Council. We can't throw up the sponge."

"What is the solution?" asked Ram Singh.

"Anything to which both parties are agreed," said the official. "The only thing on which both were agreed was plebiscite. Now there seems to be no agreement even on that."

"Why should you not suggest to the Pakistanis at least to call off their propaganda for holy war against India?" asked Ram Singh.

"They are an independent country. What can we do?" asked the official.

But Ram Singh argued, "You have a special responsibility because you are partners with Pakistan in the Baghdad Pact and SEATO."

"You flatter us if you think we can influence Pakistan on Kashmir," said the official. "And don't forget that this kind of argument cuts both ways. They protested when we sold you Hunters and Canberras. You think we are too pro-Pakistan. They think we are too pro-Indian. Perhaps we are neither."

"Your statement bears out India's complaint against Britain, namely, that you try to equate the aggressor and the victim of aggression," said Ram Singh.

"Let us see how your country has dealt with aggression," said the official. "Your representative in the Security Council voted for the resolution declaring North Korea the aggressor. But when it came to sending troops to put an end to the aggression, your country kept neutral."

"There is no parallel between the two," said Ram Singh. "In Korea, whether North Korea won or South Korea won, issues of democracy-*versus*-communism apart, the country would have remained Korean. I am not defending or criticizing what India did. I am just trying to point out that in Kashmir, it was not a civil war like in Korea. If Pakistan had won, she would have annexed the whole of Kashmir, driven out or massacred all the non-Muslims, suppressed the forces of secularism and imposed a theocratic regime there."

"You asked me what could be a possible solution for Kashmir," said the official. "Speaking for myself, I should think there is no question of handing over the Hindu areas of Jammu to Pakistan. The Muslims in territory already overrun by Pakistan have made some kind of adjustment and they need not be disturbed. The bone of contention is thus narrowed down to the valley. Now both sides are agreed that the future of Kashmir should be settled by plebiscite...."

Ram Singh interrupted him. "Both India and Pakistan," he said, "have insisted that a plebiscite should be for the disposition of the State as a whole. Neither has favoured partition. Anyway, the plebiscite offer was made long ago. Where is the question of plebiscite now after the people of Kashmir have decided the issue in two general elections and expressed their will in no uncertain terms through their Constituent Assembly?"

"The Pakistanis say that they were not free elections," the official remarked.

"I would not take their views on elections seriously—till they themselves know what they are talking about," retorted Ram Singh. "Why should they want elections at all in Kashmir when they themselves have managed to do without elections to their Parliament? When they speak about elections, it is like a teetotalter pronouncing judgement on the comparative merits of beer and whisky."

"You don't expect me to comment on purely internal matters," said the official. "Whether Pakistan has elections or not is their business."

"But when they talk about elections in Kashmir not being free, they are interfering in our internal matters," Ram Singh replied.

"Yes, but then for a long time you were prepared of discuss plebiscite with them," said the official.

“There are a few fat volumes on the subject in my library.”

“If we talked about plebiscite,” said Ram Singh, “it did not mean that we were committed to it under all circumstances. Merely talking about a subject does not involve acceptance of any commitment. In any event, if we talked about plebiscite, the Pakistanis did seem at one stage to accept the argument that they have no business to be in Kashmir and they should get out. Why should you not remind Pakistanis about that?” Ram Singh added, “Perhaps you could tell the Pakistanis, ‘Please carry out your obligation and vacate aggression. Then you will be in a stronger position to insist on a plebiscite.’ ”

Of course one did not get anywhere by arguments and counter-arguments. But his conversation with the official did help Ram Singh to arrive at the conclusion that the deadlock in Kashmir was not going to be broken over any foreseeable period. Both sides would go on criticizing each other in the Security Council and the role of ‘honest brokers’ was an unenviable one.

CHAPTER XVI

POINTS OF VIEW

India's difficulty in getting justice from the Security Council showed the weaknesses in international law. When India relied on assurances given by the United Nations Commission on Kashmir in support of her stand that Pakistan should quit unconditionally, the Pakistanis relied on assurances given by a sub-committee of that commission and on the ambiguities of the English language. The Pakistanis made a great show of reasonableness by saying that they were prepared for arbitration on the disputed points. But India's position was not the same as Pakistan's. The lives, honour and security of her citizens were involved in the 'dispute'. For Pakistan, it was a question of winning something that did not belong to her. She had nothing to lose apart, of course, from the question of loss of prestige at home which, after all, would affect only the Government of the day and not the foundations of the State.

That raised the whole question of international law. When one examined international law from the point of view of Asian and African interests, what struck one was the fact that it was 'international' only in a narrow sense of the word. International law had been framed by the nations of Europe against the background

of Europe's problems and needs. What was the position of colonialism, for instance, under international law? So far as Asia or Africa was concerned, colonialism was 'continuing aggression.' But this theory would not be upheld by the World Court at the Hague. So far as Asia or Africa was concerned, a colonial people could not rebel: when they took up arms, they were carrying out the obligations of patriotism. It was not the 'rebellion' that was illegal but the continuance of the colonial power. Even Mahatma Gandhi, who laid so much stress on nonviolence, had ruled that if a people were not capable of overthrowing their colonial masters through *satyagraha*, it was their duty to take up arms. The greatest sin, he preached, was submission to colonialism, which was a denial of human rights.

The colonial countries talked of 'legally constituted authority'. When 'native' soldiers in a colony turned their guns on the colonialists, they were shot or hanged as traitors who had waged "war against the King". True they had taken the oath of loyalty to the King. But they had no right to do so. The doctrine that no man could sell himself into slavery applied equally to the colonial peoples in their relationship with self-imposed authority.

In the present state of anarchy, with world conscience dulled by colonialism, Ram Singh felt, there was no chance of India securing the Pakistan-occupied parts of Kashmir by recourse to international law.

The Indian delegates might not have argued their case as well in the earlier stages of the debate as they did subsequently. But the Security Council was not in any case a court where the judges listened to the arguments for and against and gave judgement. The delegates voted according to the instructions of their Foreign Offices. The speeches at the Council were valuable only in so far as they might have an influence on public opinion through the publicity secured through press and radio.

The composition of the Council was unrealistic. It was based on the balance of power as it had emerged at the end of the Second World War. Thus Britain was a permanent member but not Germany which was in no respect inferior to Britain. France was a permanent member but not Italy. China was represented by the authority which survived precariously in Formosa. India was not a permanent member despite the fact that she had the second largest population in the world and she was one of the super-Powers of the future.

India had never been in the minds of the framers of the United Nations Charter. She was admitted to membership only to give Britain an extra vote. Nobody had foreseen that she would become independent and play a vital role in international affairs so soon.

Ram Singh remembered a broadcast by Field Marshal Smuts soon after the framing of the Charter,

There were only two great powers, he had declared. These were the United States and the Soviet Union. France was given the status of a great power by virtue of her past and China—at that time Chiang Kai-shek's China—was a great power because of the promise of the future. Britain was not a great power but the British Empire and Commonwealth was.

The great Field Marshal, one of the most astute statesmen in the world, forgot to mention India altogether.

Nevertheless, bodies like the World Court and the United Nations deserved all support and encouragement because in them, the Indian leaders were convinced, lay the seeds of world Government. But one need not expect too much from them immediately. And even in regard to the present, one could not say that the Security Council had been wholly ineffective in regard to Kashmir. The Security Council had managed to persuade the parties to come to a 'cease fire' agreement supervised by U.N. Observers and that was a big enough achievement by any standards. After all the main job of the Security Council was to keep the peace, and some kind of a peace had been brought about in Kashmir though it was not the kind that either party wanted. That might be the view taken at Lake Success.

The way one looked at a question very often depended on the place from where one viewed it. And from Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe Ram Singh discovered a new image of Britain which had played the

leading role in the Security Council debates on Kashmir and whose influence in world affairs was far greater than was generally realised. The image of Britain as a colonial power was familiar enough to Ram Singh. Indeed it was the only image he had known. But there was another Britain. To the Danes, for instance, Britain did not appear as a colonial power at all. If by colonialism was meant the imposition of the rule of one country over another by force, well, the Danes were proud of the fact that they had once conquered Britain and ruled over her.

To the Danes and the Norwegians—for that matter to the Dutch and many other peoples conquered by Hitler during the Second World War—Britain was not a colonial country but the land of hope and glory. They remembered that when their own lands were being trampled on by the Nazi jackboot, England stood alone as a fortress of freedom. From England was built the great strength and power that ultimately led to their liberation. Had Britain collapsed like France, the light of freedom would have been put out in Europe for ever.

These people liked England and trusted her. They respected England's wisdom and her sense of fairplay and justice. Having had no colonies for centuries, people in Scandinavia could not understand the hatred, the distrust, the suspicion and the cruelty of colonialism. When one talked of British colonialism to them, they pointed out that Britain was one of the few countries in the world which had voluntarily relinquished power.

They also pointed to the partnership between India and Britain as a model for all colonial Empires to follow.

India's accusations of partiality against Britain on the Kashmir issue did not cut much ice. The Scandinavians argued, "If the Indians really mean what they say, they would not stay in the same Commonwealth with Britain. Look at what the Indonesians did. When Holland refused to part with Dutch New Guinea, they broke away from the Netherlands-Indonesian Union. If the Indians felt half as strong over Kashmir as the Indonesians do over West Irian, they would not have allowed their Prime Minister to visit London year after year and reaffirm loyalty to the ideals of the Commonwealth. Furthermore, the Pakistanis are accusing Britain of partiality as much as India does. When both parties are equally critical of Britain, it surely is an indication that Britain is holding the scales even."

British newspapers which arrived daily within a few hours of their publication in London kept the Scandinavians informed of the British view on Kashmir and other issues. They were thus very effective instruments of moulding public opinion not only in their own country but also abroad. If India wanted her case not to go by default, she would have to improve her publicity machinery not only on the Continent but also in London. The British press was not basically anti-Indian even on Kashmir. But today the most elementary techniques of public relations were not being adopted by India in her dealings with the British press with the result tha

her enemies who were more enterprising had the field to themselves.

Ram Singh tried to imagine how the events of the last few years could be viewed by a Briton who wished to be friendly to both India and Pakistan. Of course not every Briton was pro-Indian but then not every Briton was pro-Pakistan.

Seen in this light, it could be argued that the Kashmir troubles had come at a most awkward moment for the British Government. When the Government headed by Attlee decided to transfer power to Indian hands, the move met with considerable opposition in Britain. Very influential Britons, particularly those in the Conservative Party, told Labour that if the British were to quit, the tribesmen would once again stream down the Khyber to loot and rape as they had done for centuries before British rule. "Even we found it so difficult to control the turbulent tribesmen. Do you think the inexperienced Indians will be able to protect the border?" That was their argument.

When Srinagar was on the point of being razed to the ground and when reports of large-scale loot, arson and rape at Baramula reached London, these diehards told the Labour Government, "We told you so."

It must be remembered that Britain was not, and had never been ashamed of her imperialism. From Mill downwards, the greatest of her humanists had declared that British rule was good for India.

When India went to the Security Council demanding vacation of Pakistan's aggression, what did it imply for Britain? If Britain had agreed with India that Pakistan had committed aggression, would she not have been called upon to send troops back to the sub-continent to throw out the invader? If the Labour Government had been prepared to send troops to the sub-continent, what answer would it have given to the Conservatives whose case was that Britain need not have withdrawn at all in the first instance?

It could be argued that Britain could have done what India did subsequently in regard to Korea, namely to acknowledge that aggression had taken place without following up that declaration by the despatch of troops. But unlike India, Britain had great power status and it would not have been possible for her to escape the commitments that the Council would have called upon her to undertake.

On the other hand, the aggression was so flagrant that it was not possible for her to declare that no aggression had taken place. So she played for time.

In a way, the mild manner in which India originally presented her case against Pakistan helped the United Kingdom to avoid taking an immediate decision. Had the Indian representatives at home and abroad refused to discuss any matter other than that of immediate vacation of aggression, it would have proved very embarrassing to the West.

The first move in the Fabian tactics of the West was to despatch a Commission. The setting up of a committee or commission to delay decision was a well-known procedure followed by all Governments in the world. One commission was followed by another.

If things had remained static, perhaps these tactics of delay and procrastination would have been merely irritating. As things developed, they had the effect of helping Pakistan positively.

When India first went with her complaint to the Security Council, Pakistan denied any responsibility for what had happened in Kashmir. She did not dare justify what she had done. She laid the whole blame at the door of the tribesmen, though she did attempt a lame defence for them. When the U.N. Commission reached Karachi, it was no longer possible for Pakistan to hide her active participation in the war. So she argued that a few troops had been sent in a purely defensive role--to prevent the Indian Army from coming too near the Pakistan frontier. Of course the Indo-Pakistan frontier was already so long that a few more miles added to it would not have made any difference. Anyway, what was important was the fact that she seemed conscious at that time that what she had done in Kashmir was indefensible.

But when talk of aggression receded to the background and the discussions and debates began to turn round the subject of plebiscite, Pakistan slowly began to

assert her 'right' to Kashmir. She even began to convince herself that India was the aggressor and Pakistan was the victim of Indian aggression !

The international situation was gradually favouring Pakistan. Pakistan's stock in the Western world rose in direct proportion to the intensity of the cold war. Immersed in the work of development, India in her foreign policy tried to be friendly with both blocs and bring them together at a time when the West was looking not merely for the friendship of every democratic country but its alliance in mutual security pacts. Finding that India was becoming unpopular in the West because of her policy of non-alignment, the Pakistanis signed on the dotted line in an effort to secure Western support for their Kashmir case in return for their adherence to Western-sponsored military pacts.

The West argued with India quite sincerely that in accepting Pakistan as a military pact partner, it was accepting no special commitments in regard to Kashmir. That might be so as far as the agreements, written and oral, went; but the biggest commitments in life flowed not from written agreements or promises but from a sense of moral obligation to a friend in need. The evil of 'bloc voting' was inherent in the creation of blocs. 'Bloc voting' did not come into play in international bodies only when the interests of the allies clashed. On Kashmir there was no clash of interest among the allies. Most of them did not know where it was. They could

not care less whether it went to India or to Pakistan. When debates were held, all that was necessary for the allies was to support each other. The British were, of course, the 'experts' on Indo-Pakistan issues. The United States, being the most powerful ally, occupied a special place. The rest of the allies took their cue from the Pakistani, the Briton and the American. When the British delegate propounded a new solution, the Australian or Canadian would support him. The Frenchman would give a few additional arguments on the same lines. The Formosan delegate, smarting under India's attitude to his regime, would give his strong support to Pakistan, though he did not particularly care for Pakistan. And then there was the eloquent delegate from the Philippines. The oratory of the delegate from Iraq was another great asset of Pakistan. There was also valiant Turkey to champion Pakistan's cause.

No wonder as the debates proceeded, India got fed up with the whole show. No wonder her delegates lost their patience.

After listening to these debates, one got the impression that no one meant what he said. One sometimes felt that the Western delegates supported Pakistan so openly only because they knew that the Russian veto would come to their rescue.

A plebiscite seemed such a wonderful solution but would any Government in India last a day if it lost Kashmir? And in the absence of a Government, who

would hand over the valley to Pakistan ? For that matter, which Government would survive in Pakistan if they 'lost' even 'Azad Kashmir,' which really was not legally Pakistan territory ? And was it safe for Pakistan to lay so much emphasis on the idea of plebiscite ? Supposing the Pakhtoons were to demand a plebiscite, would Pakistan grant it ?

Emotions would be roused by a plebiscite which might have disastrous consequences. If the people of Kashmir, the majority of whom were Muslim, were so worked up communally that they would vote for Pakistan, would the people in the rest of India take it lying down ? Similarly, if the people of Kashmir were to vote solidly for India, what would happen to Pakistan ? Was there a guarantee that the Army or any other group would not stage a *coup d'etat* in Pakistan and refuse to abide by the verdict of the plebiscite ? If the territory that still remained under Pakistani control was not handed over to India even after a verdict in India's favour, how was India to enforce her right ? Was she to invade Pakistan after all ? If she was prepared to invade Pakistan, she could do so any day, relying on her legal rights in occupied Kashmir.

If India permitted the U.N. to link the question of vacation of aggression with that of plebiscite, it would amount to giving up all her legal and moral rights on which her complaint was based. Therefore, even at the risk of boring the members of the Security Council she

would have to stick to one demand in reply to all the brilliant arguments in the Security Council, namely that Pakistan must vacate her aggression.

An Englishman once asked Ram Singh in London, as they were watching the steamers anchored in the Thames, loaded with merchandise from the four corners of the world, "Will you admit that India is bound to lose a plebiscite in Kashmir?"

Ram Singh tried a novel reply. Pointing to one of the many bridges on the Thames, he asked his companion, "What about jumping into the Thames from that bridge over there?"

"Both of us?" queried the Englishman, wondering what it had to do with Kashmir. "Perhaps I would have obliged you," said the Englishman after a pause, "but for the fact that I can't swim. Are you going to give a demonstration?"

"No," replied Ram Singh. "I am just trying to illustrate something that was passing in my mind about plebiscite in Kashmir. Now let us see why you will not jump into the Thames. It is because life is dear to all of us. You don't know how to swim and would not risk your neck. There is no reason why you should. But supposing you take a couple of bottles of Scotch, are you sure that you would not get a little Dutch courage?"

"A couple of bottles of Scotch?" asked the Englishman, "Wouldn't they be adequate to make me charge

the Brigade of Guards with a pen-knife, let alone jumping into a river and getting a little wet?"

"Will I be wrong if I were to say that under the influence of liquor, you may do things which you will not do in your normal, sane moments?" asked Ram Singh. "But if you murdered a man under the influence of liquor, would it save you from the gallows?"

"I am not a lawyer," said the Englishman, "but it seems to me that I will swing, whether I committed the murder after taking a sip of water or a peg of Scotch."

"Just as individuals can go mad," said Ram Singh, "it seems to me that a whole people can, and do, go mad temporarily. The average Indian and the average Pakistani have profound faith in God, in the religion of their fathers, in the precepts of the Holy Books. But you know what happened in India and Pakistan after partition. Now talking about plebiscite, the Northwest Frontier was a Congress Province. But in a referendum the Muslim League won. But victory did not bring the Punjabi Muslim and the Pakhtoon closer.

"Why did the Pathan in the Northwest Frontier vote for Pakistan? The people who campaigned for Pakistan did not explain to the voters the difference between the kind of State they wanted to build and the secular State that India was going to be. They did not tell them that even if they voted for India, their religion would be safe. Instead they told them, 'The choice before

you is whether you will vote for the holy *Koran* or for the religion of the *kafir*, whether you will turn your faces towards Mecca or bow your heads before the idols of the Hindus. A vote for India is a vote against Islam.' When the voter was given that kind of choice, naturally he voted for Pakistan. But is that a free vote? Conditions being what they are, it will be that kind of propaganda that Pakistan will carry on in Kashmir if permitted to do so."

"Didn't one of the resolutions of the U.N. say that no appeal will be allowed to religious sentiments during a plebiscite?" asked the Englishman.

"The very fact that a plebiscite is held," said Ram Singh, "will be an admission that the question of religion is involved in the issue of the vote. Otherwise why should there be a plebiscite at all? Why is a plebiscite held only in Kashmir and not in Madras? Further, whatever the law says, you cannot control the propaganda done in the course of door-to-door canvassing."

"It boils down to this : you are afraid the religious propaganda of Pakistan will—or may, if you like—turn the Kashmiri insane during an election," said the Englishman. "But then are people sane in any election?"

"But this won't be just an election," said Ram Singh. "If you voted Labour and found you had made a mistake, you could correct it next time. If the

Tories won the elections and made a mess of things, you could put Labour back in the saddle. And if both the Conservatives and Labour are no good, you can turn to the Liberals. But a plebiscite forces one to decide once and for all under conditions that would be fair neither to Kashmir nor to India."

CHAPTER XVII

BATTLE OF 'ISMS'

Several forces were in conflict in and over Kashmir. The most important conflict was, of course, between secularism and pan-Islam.

The conflict in Kashmir was part of the conflict in the whole of India. If secularism was weakened in the rest of India, it would undoubtedly weaken in Kashmir. On the other hand, the triumph of secularism in Kashmir would also contribute to the defeat of communal forces in the rest of India.

The 'cold war' had also enveloped Kashmir. There was a perceptible stiffening of feeling in the West against India after the famous speech by Nikita Khrushchev in Srinagar on December 10, 1955 to a jubilant gathering of Kashmiris. But what did Khrushchev say in that speech ?

The Soviet leader first reminded the Kashmiris that the Soviet Union was not a far away country. It was India's neighbour. "Your State," Khrushchev said, "is situated nearest to the Central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The climatic conditions in your country are like those in our Central Asian Republics and the

agricultural products both there and here are about the same. On arrival here, we seemed to feel a breath of our own dear country, her Southern Central Asian part."

Surely no one could object to this part of his speech, except those who would like to see the Asian parts of the Soviet Union break away from the European part and, therefore, refused to recognise the Asian parts of the Soviet Union as Soviet territory.

"The population of Kashmir and of the capital of the State, Srinagar," Khrushchev had gone on to say, "is varied in its composition. Kashmiris, Dogras, Ladakhis live here and also amongst the inhabitants of Kashmir, there are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and representatives of other nationalities and faiths. It shows that the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir who belong to different nationalities and different faiths live as friends and want to work for the well-being of their beloved State—the Republic of India."

That was what India had been saying all along. An Indian would have said 'linguistic groups' or 'communities' and would not have used the word 'nationalities,' which did not occur in the Indian political dictionary. But that was a minor matter.

Mr. Khrushchev continued, "Friendly collaboration of peoples is specially dear to us and we understand it. Our country is multi-national in composition. People professing many faiths live in the Soviet Union.

This does not, however, lead to any misunderstandings, and the Soviet peoples live and work together as one happy family."

The Soviet Union's critics might question his statement that the Soviet people worked together as one happy family. They would say that no country could be happy under communism. But ideological issues of capitalism *versus* communism apart, it was surely desirable that people belonging to various races and professing different faiths should live together as a happy family. The alternative was civil war.

Like India, the Soviet Union was multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious. Ram Singh believed that this one factor alone would be adequate to ensure continued Soviet support for India's stand on Kashmir whether Pakistan remained in the Western military groupings or got out.

The passage in Khrushchev's speech which had appealed to Ram Singh both when he heard it on the spot and when he read it in cold print was the one in which the Soviet leader seemed to analyse the whole philosophy of a secular State in language which no one could improve upon. It had no flourishes of flowery words. There was no rhetoric about it. It was as simple as the truth that it enunciated. Khrushchev had said, "People want to have an opportunity to work to raise their cultural standards and to have material security. Does..... this really depend on what faith

this or that people belong to? I do not think that it does. In order to have political independence, to be able constantly to raise the educational standards and ensure material security, it is not necessary to build a State on the principle of one religious faith. For this it is necessary to have a free people and also to eliminate exploitation of man by man."

Ram Singh wished that the Western powers would accept that fundamental principle instead of creating a situation in which the Russians had to use their veto. Not that the Russian veto made too much difference. Even if the Security Council had unanimously passed the resolution that was killed by the Soviet veto, namely the one calling for the despatch of U.N. troops to Kashmir, it would not have had much practical value. India, weak as she was, would have had the courage to stand up and fight the whole world for a cause which she believed was just and righteous.

Well-meaning friends in the West who wished to help India, sometimes argued that if their Governments pressed India too hard on Kashmir, she might go communist. But Ram Singh did not think that this argument was valid. If democracy in India was so brittle, it would deserve to crumble. If the people of India believed that democracy was the best form of government devised by the genius of man, they would have to follow the democratic path even if the whole democratic world was hostile to India. If on the

other hand they became convinced that communism was superior to democracy, it would be their duty to hoist the Red Flag over the Red Fort no matter what the rest of the world might think about it.

The pressure from the West on Kashmir had to be seen in perspective, Ram Singh thought. Indeed, it seemed to him that India had already learnt to keep her balance in the face of criticism from both blocs. Not so long ago, the Russians and the Chinese had denounced India as a running dog of imperialism. But this did not make India anti-Russian or anti-Chinese. She was able to allay their misunderstanding and establish friendly and cordial relations with them on the firm foundation of 'Panch Sheel'—respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence.

Despite the hostility of Britain on the Kashmir issue, India had resisted the temptation to walk out of the Commonwealth. She was convinced that the Commonwealth was one of the bridges between the East and West and it deserved strengthening.

Of course the West also deserved credit for not allowing differences over Kashmir and military alliances to affect its partnership with the world's most populous democracy in economic and cultural fields. British and American aid for India's economic

development was increasing every year and every penny of it and every cent of it was aid without strings.

This friendship between India and the West puzzled the Russians just as Indo-Russian and Sino-Indian friendship puzzled the West. Ram Singh recalled a conversation he had with a Soviet journalist on this subject soon after Mr. Khrushchev's speech freezing the *status quo* in Kashmir. Srinagar weather was cold, very cold even for the Russian, for it was mid-winter. "People seem to imagine that we are polar bears," the Russian told Ram Singh jocularly. "But we are affected by heat and cold just as you are." They adjourned to their hotel lounge where there was a heater. The lounge overlooked the Dal. One could see in the placid waters of the Dal the reflection of the hills. After discussing the weather, the Russian asked Ram Singh suddenly, "Can you explain to me why you still remain in the Commonwealth even though the British oppose you on Kashmir and support the Portuguese imperialists in Goa ? "

"It is true that they are supporting Pakistan on Kashmir even though they deny it and claim that they are not taking sides," said Ram Singh. "But what does it matter whether they support us or oppose us ?"

"They wanted to send U.N. forces here, didn't they ?" asked the Russian. Though the actual resolution

was moved long afterwards, the proposal was already being discussed in the U.N. lobbies.

"Do you think we would have allowed them?" said Ram Singh. "Don't forget that we fought them without arms and sent them packing. Surely we are not going to let U.N. troops enter Kashmir without a fight. And so far as Goa is concerned, where will it go? The Portuguese cannot take it away to Lisbon. One fine morning, whether the British approve of it or not, we will push the Portuguese back into the sea. The Government of India is still hopeful that it can influence Britain and the United States to persuade the Portuguese to liquidate their Indian Empire voluntarily. If the Portuguese don't see reason, the present Indian Government will have to change its policy or make way for another which will do so."

"What do you get out of the Commonwealth?" asked the Russian.

"What do we lose by remaining in the Commonwealth?" countered Ram Singh.

"Britain is still a colonial power," said the Russian. "I need not remind you about Kenya and Cyprus. Well, your membership of the Commonwealth gives the British Empire a respectability which it would not possess otherwise".

"On the other hand," said Ram Singh, "one could argue that by remaining in the Commonwealth we will

be able to help better the cause of people still struggling for freedom. We could tell the British, "Look, you lose nothing by granting freedom. They will still be in the Commonwealth."

"I can understand your argument," said the Russian, "if there is something in common between India and Britain. I see nothing common—only conflicting interests everywhere."

"We have many things in common with Britain," said Ram Singh. "Our way of government, for instance. We have the parliamentary system of Government modelled on the same lines, our judiciary is based on the British, our administrators have been trained by the British. Where there is conflict of interests, well, the British training will stand us in good stead; we will beat them at their own game."

"Are you satisfied that the British accept you as absolute equals in the Commonwealth?" asked the Russian. "How can you accept the British Queen as head of the Commonwealth? I believe you compare the Commonwealth to a club. What kind of a club is it where the head of State of one country is above all the rest?"

"The head of the Commonwealth is in no way superior in status to our head of State," said Ram Singh. "The Commonwealth itself is a concept. Our membership of it is not provided for in the constitution. The way we look at it, it just enables us to continue a

mutually advantageous association involving no commitments. And then the Commonwealth is very young. It is not laid down anywhere that King or Queen of England will be the head of the Commonwealth for all time. There is nothing to prevent every head of a member State from holding the post by rotation. But the headship means nothing in practice."

Ram Singh continued, "The British made a great concession when they agreed to accept Republics within the Commonwealth. After some time, the White members in the Commonwealth will be in a minority at Commonwealth functions, e.g. the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meetings. Of course this would not matter because the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference takes no decisions by majority vote. In this age one need not take anything for granted, not even the British monarchy. A time may come when even Britain will become a Republic and then the rotation of headship will become automatic. Even otherwise, having swallowed the camel of Asian and African membership, the British are not going to strain at the gnat of rotation of headship."

"I agree with you that your membership of the Commonwealth involves no commitments," said the Russian, "but I still cannot understand how you can be members of the same organisation with a country like South Africa. What is the good of your Prime Minister sitting at the table with the South African Prime

Minister at the Commonwealth Conference when Indians and Africans are treated like cattle in South Africa, not allowed to ride in the same rail-car or bus with the Whites, not permitted to sit in the same restaurant?"

"There are two ways of looking at it," said Ram Singh. "We like to think that in the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference the South African is forced to sit at the same table with our spokesman. In other words, equality at least in London is one of the obligations of Commonwealth membership. We never refused to sit with the White, so it is no hardship on us. If there is any hardship, it is on the South African. It is not for us but for the South African to decide whether it is worthwhile being in the Commonwealth on such terms.

"There is another way of examining our link with the Commonwealth. Today the most powerful partner in the Commonwealth is undoubtedly Britain. But tomorrow it is not going to be Britain. It will be India. What is Britain's leading role in the Commonwealth based on? On so many million tons of steel and coal per year, so many thousands of lathes, so many motor cars and locomotives and aeroplanes and so on. But Britain has reached saturation point. Our level of production is very low at the moment but it is growing. A time will come when we will break even with Britain and then outstrip her."

"Do you think the British will help you to reach that stage?" asked the Russian.

"Well, it is not only Britain that is helping us. There are other countries, the United States and the Soviet Union, for example."

"Some people may suggest that it is to prevent India from rising to her full stature that Britain is keeping alive issues like Kashmir," said the Russian.

"Some Britons might not like India to progress fast," said Ram Singh, "but the majority seem proud of the fact that a fellow-Commonwealth country is making so much progress through institutions inherited from Britain."

"When I looked into the Bhakra gorge," said the Russian, "I instinctively compared it with our own early projects which helped us to become the equals of the West. I have no doubt about India's future. But quite frankly I am astounded by your faith in the West. That may be because the West tried to strangle us at birth. Perhaps your experience of the West may be different."

Ram Singh looked into Khrushchev's Srinagar speech again. Khrushchev had said about the partition "One can.....say that it was not the differences in the religious faiths in the people which was the principal factor in the creation of Pakistan and in her separation from the one United State of India. Some States which

for a long time followed the well-known principle of 'divide and rule' actively helped in this. To achieve their aim, they took advantage of the factor of different religious faiths. We are absolutely convinced that when passions have calmed down and the people realise the significance of such an artificial division of India, they will regret it."

Partition and the Kashmir troubles were all inter-related, thought Ram Singh. But if one blamed the British entirely for the partition, how was it that the two countries did not come together when the British withdrew from the sub-continent? The British had undoubtedly contributed to the partition but the seeds of division were there. The British could have suppressed those seeds or permitted them to germinate. About Kashmir, the West could have shown greater sympathy for India even if it did not want to endorse her complaint against Pakistan openly. On the other hand, countries which, if the Russian was to be believed, wished to destroy India would not set about the job by trying to put her on her feet economically. There was something wrong with the Russian argument somewhere.

Russian suspicions of the West, Ram Singh reflected, were understandable. But so perhaps were the suspicions of the West about Russia. If Russian suspicions of the West dated back to the period of the civil war, Western suspicions of the Soviet Union became deep-rooted after the events of the Second World War.

It was strange that these suspicions of the West against the East and *vice versa* had contributed in a way to the maintenance of the *status quo* in Kashmir.

For a long time Ram Singh wondered why it was that support for India's stand on Kashmir should have come only from the Soviet Union and not from the West. The military alliances explained it away only partially. Then he came to the conclusion that certain views and perspectives could be revealed only in the grand sweep of a revolution. The Great October Revolution of the Soviet Union had made the Russians more conscious of certain currents and cross-currents which the practical West could not feel. That was why the Russians were more successful in their Asian and African policies than the West.

India, it seemed to him, had a historic role to play in bringing the two blocs together. She just would not have fitted in even if she, like Pakistan, had joined in military groupings. From time immemorial, the genius of the Indian people was to reconcile conflicting philosophies. This even extended to religion. When the Aryans brought their own Gods from the wilds of Central Asia, they did not destroy the Dravidian Gods. They adopted them. Had Islam and Christianity been a little less rigid, the Hindus would have 'adopted' these two religions too into their fold just as they had 'adopted' Buddhism by the simple process of making the Buddha an incarnation of Vishnu. Perhaps her

special role in the modern world was to reconcile the Fabian Socialism of the West and the Communism of the East. From that point of view he was happy that India had not become 'anti-Western' because of the Western attitude to Kashmir and had not been swept off her feet because of Soviet support.

CHAPTER XVIII

HYDERABAD, JUNAGADH, GENOCIDE

Ram Singh's first introduction to Pakistan had been from the air. The country had just been partitioned. He flew over East Punjab and part of West Punjab in the Indian Governor-General's special aircraft to see the stream of refugees pouring in and out of India and Pakistan.

From the air, one could see Muslim houses destroyed and burnt in East Punjab. One could also pick out Hindu houses destroyed in West Pakistan villages and in Lahore.

The aircraft flew over the Golden Temple at Amritsar where Hindu and Sikh refugees were being fed at the *Guru ka langar*. It also circled over the famous mosque in Lahore where Muslim refugees were squatting.

The Hindu-Sikh refugee column was fifteen to twenty miles long. So was the column of Muslim refugees which was entering West Pakistan.

No one who had seen that sight would wish it to happen again. It would be a bad day if Hindus and Sikhs were to come out of Kashmir and Jammu as refugees. Yet precisely that would happen if Pakistan

were permitted to occupy those areas of Jammu and Kashmir which were under the Indian Army's protection.

Whenever the Indian delegate talked about Kashmir in the Security Council, the Pakistanis linked Kashmir with Hyderabad, Junagadh and genocide. They did not talk of Goa but they could as well do so.

Was there anything in common between the issues involved in Kashmir and those in Hyderabad, Junagadh and Goa? Yes, there was, Ram Singh thought. Whether it was in Kashmir or Hyderabad, Junagadh or Goa, the Indian stand had been one and the same—the people's will should prevail. The Pakistanis might say that they would accept as people's will only the result of elections supervised by foreigners. But that was another issue involving national self-respect and sovereignty.

Was it Pakistan's contention that because the ruler of Junagadh had signed some kind of an instrument of accession seeking to hand over the State to Pakistan, the people's will did not matter? If so, what was her claim on Kashmir? Had not the Maharaja of Kashmir signed the instrument of accession to India?

Where did Hyderabad come into the picture at all? Hyderabad had not acceded to Pakistan nor had there ever been any talk of Hyderabad doing so. All that the Nizam had done was to declare his 'right' to

become independent. He had not proclaimed independence. It was the State of Travancore in the south of India that had proclaimed its independence and even sent an envoy to Pakistan. But Pakistan did not mention Travancore at all in any of her arguments. In Travancore, the people overthrew the Dewan who had been responsible for advising the ruler to proclaim independence and the Maharaja promptly acceded to India. The person who got the Nawab of Junagadh to accede to Pakistan was the Dewan of that State. Unfortunately both the Dewan and the Nawab ran away to Pakistan after signing the so-called accession. Had the Nawab remained in Junagadh, would he not have acceded to India in accordance with the people's wishes and saved his own properties besides ?

India launched her police action against the Razakars of Hyderabad only when law and order had broken down completely in the heart of the Deccan. Had India wanted to put pressure on the Nizam to accede, she would not have withdrawn her troops from Secunderabad and then commenced negotiations with His Exalted Highness. India decided deliberately to reason with the Nizam. In fact the Nizam was offered terms which were better than those accepted by other Princes in India.

Neither Hyderabad nor Kashmir had ever been independent. The British Residents had always been more powerful than the nominal rulers.

In the normal course of events, the Nizam would have had to grant responsible government in any case, and a popular government would have undoubtedly acceded to India. In Kashmir too, the Maharaja would have had to concede responsible government, in which case the National Conference would have become the ruling party. There was no love lost between the Muslim League and the National Conference, whose leader was leading the All-India States People's Conference organised under the guidance of the Indian National Congress. Therefore there was no question of a popular government in Kashmir acceding to Pakistan.

The Razakar trouble in Hyderabad hastened the process of accession of the State to India, which would have come about in any case. The Maharaja of Kashmir might have hesitated to accede to India but a popular government would not have had any such hesitation at all. In any event, India being the successor State, she inherited from the British certain obligations in regard to the defence of the ex-Indian States and there could be no obligations without rights. Pakistan could not claim that Kashmir was a kind of no-man's land before the accession of the State to India. Even if it had been, it ceased to be so with the accession.

If the Pakistan charge of 'brown colonialism' against India was to be sustained, she would have to explain why the Pakistani invaders were not welcomed as liberators by the people of Kashmir while the

accession to India was hailed with joy by the leaders of the National Conference and by the public of Kashmir in October 1947. If Pakistan was so confident about her position in Junagadh, why did she not land troops there relying on the piece of paper in her possession? And what was the alternative to accession to India in Hyderabad? Telangana showed that in Hyderabad, the Nizam would not have been able to control the situation. There would have been either Razakar rule or communist rule.

The Indian Army did not behave like a conquering army when it returned to its barracks in Secunderabad after the police action. The Central Government's representative had been treated very badly during the police action by the Nizam's Government. But the Army did not wreak vengeance on the Nizam. It treated him with the utmost respect and deference. The Nizam was one of the richest persons on earth. His treasury was bursting with precious stones, bullion and jewellery. The Indian soldiers would have looted it if they had been like the invaders of Kashmir. But there was no Baramula in Hyderabad.

The Nizam's gold and jewels would have come in handy to meet the Government of India's foreign exchange difficulties. No one would have blamed the Central Government had they taken them over and given the Nizam long-term bonds. After all, every pie of the Nizam's wealth had been taken from the people. But

the Government of India permitted the Nizam to dispose of his wealth as he pleased and even to create tax-free trusts for the benefit of the members of his family. If at any time he would lose his hoarded wealth, he would not be alone. Everybody in India similarly placed would be in the same boat. So far as India was concerned, the chapter of the Nizam's intransigence was a closed chapter never to be recalled except by historians.

Of course no war could be fought and no military action launched without making one's soldiers hate the enemy. And the Indian soldiers had naturally been taught to hate the Nizam's Army when they were being organised for the police action. But the first thing that the Indian Generals did on reaching Secunderabad was to tell the Indian Army, "From now on, the Nizam and the Hyderabad Army are not to be regarded as our enemy. They are our friends. You should regard the Hyderabad Army as co-operating troops. They are just like any other State forces—your equals."

After the police action, many of the administrators who had served the Nizam well during his struggle against the Central Government were given positions of influence and authority under the Centre. It would be difficult to point to a single instance where it could be said that the subjects of the Nizam had been discriminated against on political or religious grounds.

What would have been the position of the majority community in Junagadh if the State had gone to Pakistan? What would have been the position of the minority community in Kashmir—or for that matter even the majority community—if the Indian Army had not cleared the raiders from the Kashmir valley proper? What would have been the fate of the Maharaja and his officials?

Many well-meaning people abroad had told Ram Singh that if the Kashmir issue could be settled somehow, the two countries would be able to serve the cause of world peace better. That was true enough but how was that to be achieved? Any satisfactory solution would have to satisfy both parties. If any sacrifice had to be made, both parties would have to make it. India had already made a big sacrifice by making a unilateral declaration that she would not use force to reclaim that part of Kashmir which was under the illegal occupation of Pakistan. Why should not Pakistan say, "We do not recognise the Indian occupation of Kashmir. We believe that India has no moral or legal right to be there and that the State belongs to us by right. But in the interests of peace, we declare that we will not violate the 'cease fire' line and we will seek to achieve our objective in Kashmir only through peaceful and non-violent means."

If India surrendered on Kashmir, that would not be the end of Indo-Pakistan problems. It would be the beginning of fresh claims on India.

Already the Pakistani representatives were telling the nations of the world that India was trying to turn Pakistan into a desert by cutting off the water supply from the eastern rivers. If Pakistan won a spectacular victory over India on Kashmir, then the canal waters issue would become the number one problem between India and Pakistan instead of Kashmir. Pakistan would make no effort at all to implement the World Bank's proposals whereby Pakistan would have the use of the waters of the western rivers and India of the eastern rivers. Broadly speaking, the World Bank proposals would give Pakistan seventyfive per cent of the waters of the Punjab river system--the waters of the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab, and India twentyfive per cent—the waters of the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. India would also make a monetary contribution towards the building of the link canals that Pakistan would need to replace the 'historic withdrawals' from the eastern rivers. By no stretch of the imagination could these proposals be described as 'unfair' to Pakistan. Yet Pakistan propaganda talked of India trying to turn Pakistan into a desert.

If the canal waters problem was also solved, there was the evacuee property dispute. The difference between the value of the properties left behind in India by Muslim refugees and that of Hindu refugees from West Pakistan was over Rs. 400 crores in India's favour. If this figure was disputed by Pakistan, it could be referred to arbitration. Unlike Kashmir, no question

of sovereignty—which by its very nature could not be subjected to arbitration—was involved in the evacuee property dispute. The evacuee property dispute could be compared to a property suit. Why should the settlement of that be delayed so long? Some people felt that if the Kashmir issue and canal waters issue were settled, the evacuee property dispute could also be settled. On the other hand one could also argue that if Pakistan was interested in settling all outstanding disputes with India, she would settle the smaller disputes like the evacuee property issue first in order to reduce the number of disputes.

The problem of influx of refugees from East Pakistan was potentially as explosive as that of Kashmir—in fact more, because while some kind of a peace had been achieved in Kashmir and the minorities could live without fear at least in the areas controlled by the Kashmir Government, there seemed to be no possibility of the sore in the eastern border ever healing.

If an international inquiry into Pakistan's charges of 'genocide' would do good, Ram Singh thought, it should be held. Only, the scope of its work should cover not only India but the whole of Pakistan. Let the world know the full magnitude of the riots and killing and atrocities perpetrated by the two peoples and pronounce judgement on the political theories which had contributed to the tragedy.

How long would the precarious peace in Kashmir last? Ram Singh wondered. It seemed to him that

the 'cease fire' line could hold indefinitely. It was unthinkable that the West would allow the weapons and armaments that it supplied to Pakistan to be turned against India, particularly when the West was beginning to realise that 'uncommitted' countries like India were as important to the democracies as those which were prepared to toe the line.

What the effect of the stalemate in Kashmir would be on Pakistan's internal situation no one could say. But surely the intense propaganda for *jehad* would have its repercussions. If it became clear that *jehad* was not a practical proposition, the people of Pakistan in their frustration might turn on their rulers.

There was always a possibility that to divert attention from the failure of their policies, the rulers of Pakistan might defy the West and unleash a war against India. The absence of a strong leadership in Pakistan was a standing invitation to some demagogue or adventurer to seize power and gamble on a quick victory over India.

In the last analysis, the real problem between India and Pakistan was not Kashmir or canal waters or East Pakistan refugees or evacuee property but the spirit of blind hatred, fear and suspicion which antedated the partition. The Muslim League had ceased to be the ruling party in Pakistan but the spirit of hatred against India that owed its origin to the Muslim League somehow survived. There were 'Liberals,' 'Rightists,' 'Leftists,'

'Socialists' and 'Capitalists' in Pakistan as in every country, but somehow, when it came to India, all ganged up. In India one could always find someone to speak for Pakistan publicly. In Pakistan no one dared support the Indian stand on any issue, for anti-Indian feeling had reached such a pitch of intensity that any Pakistani who did so ran the risk of being dubbed a traitor.

The existence of problems between the two countries contributed to the tension but if Pakistan had a government more reasonably disposed towards India, the hatreds could have been reduced gradually. Much depended in under-developed countries on the attitude adopted by the governments. India, for instance, had her problems with Ceylon. But while during the regime of Sir John Kotelawala the problem of people of Indian origin in Ceylon was a constant source of friction between the two countries, it was seen in its proper perspective when the government of Mr. Bandaranaike took over. The problem of people of Indian origin was as intractable as ever but that did not prevent India and Ceylon from working together in the service of larger world causes. Whatever be their mutual differences, India and Pakistan ought to work together at least on issues like colonialism. But such was the feeling against India in the ruling circles of Pakistan that they did not hesitate to fraternise even with the Fascist Dictator of Portugal just to embarrass India. Barring the censored press in Portugal, the pro-Government press in Pakistan was

the only section of the world press where there was open support for Portugal on the Goa issue.

In their effort to secure Kashmir, the Pakistan Government used tactics which were now recoiling on it. In the expectation of continued British support on the Kashmir issue, the Pakistan Government went to the extent of justifying the Suez war which was denounced by the majority of Britons and by the United States of America. By supporting Sir Anthony Eden's adventure, Pakistan had cut herself off from a major part of the Islamic world of the Middle East. Britain herself, realising the futility of pressure on India on the Kashmir issue, was slowly preparing the ground for leaving the matter to be settled by the parties themselves through peaceful means. Finding their hopes dashed to the ground, Pakistan's rulers were threatening the West that they would withdraw from Western-sponsored military alliances and join the Soviet bloc. Apart from the fact that the Soviet Union was not likely to give up Indo-Soviet friendship the moment Pakistan sought her hand, Pakistan was not in a position to blackmail the West. The West had made it clear in the Security Council, through the Australian delegate, that they had not rejected the Indian charge of aggression against Pakistan: they had just not considered it. That implied that there was nothing standing in the way if the West wished to sustain it.

One felt tempted to say that if general elections were held in Pakistan and Pakistan got a freely elected government, the prospects of Indo-Pakistan friendship would brighten up. But if the experience of other countries was any guide, friendships and enmities need not necessarily be linked up with the system of government in a particular country.

The Suez adventure had been launched by one of the greatest of democrats, a gentleman in every sense of the word, a man admired in the whole of the free world. It was blessed by the Mother of Parliaments, though by a majority vote. True, British Labour mobilised against the Suez war the mass of the British people and brought the pressure of public opinion to bear on the Government. But France too was a democratic country and so was Israel. And the Governments of France and Israel had their public opinion in favour of the invasion.

Nationalism and self-interest could blind even democracies to all sense of right and wrong.

The communists claimed that their system of government and philosophy of life ensured peace between peoples better than the capitalist or Western socialist system. But the Western democracies would point out that the subversion of the model democracy of Czechoslovakia and the invasion of South Korea by the North were not good examples of co-existence.

Ram Singh himself had seen that Finnish public opinion was anti-Soviet. Under her treaty obligations, Finland had to remain a neutral country and could not join Western-sponsored military alliances. But to ensure that this provision in the Finnish-Soviet agreement was honoured, the Finnish Government had had to make foreign policy the special responsibility of the President. The Finnish Government had a Foreign Minister nominally responsible for foreign policy but he could not carry out basic changes without the approval of the President.

Men in uniform often argued that the military were by nature more peace-loving than civilians. But one could quote any number of instances to show that soldiers could be war-mongers as much as civilians. Japan, for instance, had been ruled by her Generals and Admirals before the Second World War. That did not make her peace-loving. In Germany, Hitler had been helped to power by her Marshals.

Therefore, there was no guarantee that if the quarrelsome politicians of Pakistan were replaced by Generals and Commodores, they would be less inclined towards a *jihad*.

The only safeguard then was in India trusting in God but keeping her powder dry.

CHAPTER XIX

FRIEND AND FOE

SEATO and the Baghdad Pact had upset the balance of power in the sub-continent which had kept the peace. With her forces equipped with the latest arms obtained free from her allies, Pakistan could at any time concentrate more troops and arms than India at any particular point and launch an attack which would yield her initial gains. In the long run India's might would overtake her but Pakistani leaders might argue that by that time the Security Council would have ordered a 'cease fire' which would permit her to keep the initial gains.

The effect of military aid to Pakistan was thus to encourage aggression.

Many people had said to Ram Singh outside India, "Surely a huge country like India cannot be afraid of little Pakistan, military aid or no military aid." Indeed, much of the sympathy abroad for Pakistan might be due to the picture painted by Pakistan of the 'big bully,' namely India, trying to 'swallow' up little Pakistan.

But history was full of instances of little countries bullying, dictating to and dominating countries far bigger and potentially more powerful than themselves.

Tiny England had managed to rule over India for centuries. Even after the liquidation of her Indian, Burmese, Ceylonese, Malayan and other possessions, she still held domain over an area many times her size. Her naval bases girdled the world.

Little Holland had kept the three thousand odd islands of Indonesia under her sway for two centuries. The eighty million Indonesians were powerless to wrest West Irian from her.

All the Arab countries and all the teeming millions of Asia protested against the French atrocities in Algeria. But they had been unable to stop them.

Where was Macedon in the constellation of the independent Greek States? Sparta was far superior to Macedon in military traditions. Athens was far more prosperous and cultured than Macedon. Compared to the Athenians, the Macedonians were barbarians. But Philip had humbled the armies of all other Greek States and his son, Alexander, ruled over all the land that lay between Greece and India and was exalted to the status of a God in his lifetime. The thousands of 'Sikanders' and 'Alexanders' all over the world testified to the greatness of the Greek hero.

Did anyone imagine that the disorganised nomads of Arabia would be able to found an empire? But that was what they did under proper leadership. They carried the banner of Islam from Arabia to Spain.

Small Turkey ruled over one of the mightiest empires in the world till her defeat in the First World War.

The Chinese giant reeled under the blows of little Japan till the end of the Second World War. Even now, the United States, with less than one-third of her population, was far more powerful than China, and China could not do more than protest when the U.S. fleet threw its mantle of protection over the rebels in Formosa.

All the Arab armies of the modern world had been unable to beat Israel. There was one stage in the war against Israel during which King Farouk felt compelled to invoke British aid to meet Israel's threat to his own borders.

Indeed, it would seem that it was easier for small countries to conquer the big countries than for the big countries to conquer the small ones. The Soviet Union discovered that in Finland and Mussolini in Greece.

But all said and done, despite Kashmir, despite canal waters, despite evacuee property, despite the problem of East Bengal refugees and a host of other problems, there was still an underlying friendship between the Indian people and the people of Pakistan. And it could not be said that all Pakistan leaders were anti-Indian or that most of the Indian leaders were anti-Pakistan.

When Indian and Pakistani officials or non-officials met abroad on a personal level, they talked about their common friends, common memories. They entertained each other. It was very difficult for a foreigner to make out who was an Indian and who a Pakistani.

The people of India and Pakistan had more things in common with each other than with any other people in the world. Many of the problems they faced internally were also similar. If Pakistan had a language problem, so had India. If Pakistan was finding it difficult to integrate East and West Pakistan, India's problem of integrating the Hindi and non-Hindi speaking areas was no less difficult. Both Governments were trying to raise the standard of living of their peoples. Both could learn from each other's experience. There was no reason why there could not be a little goodwill for each other in spite of their problems of mutual adjustment.

It was easy for politicians in Pakistan to say, "we cannot live without Kashmir ; for us it is a life and death question." For whom was it a matter of life or death ? Did every Sindhi feel that he must own Kashmir ? Did every Pathan pine for a villa on the banks of the Jhelum or the Dal ? Did the East Bengalis feel that Kashmir was the only paradise on earth for them ? Did the people of Baluchistan or Bahawalpur demand a *jehad*?

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Was it not significant that while even on an issue like that of Goa, the Government of India had all along been trying to restrain their people, in Pakistan the entire official propaganda machinery was geared to whipping up anti-Indian passion on Kashmir? Were the Ministers and officials in Pakistan afraid that if they did not keep up the 'hate campaign' with all the resources available to the modern State, it would die a natural death?

Even as it was, the people of both countries were resuming social, cultural and other contacts.

There was a time when people said, "No Sikh will ever be able to set foot in Lahore again." But that was long ago. It did not apply now.

There was a time when people said that no Muslim could live in East Punjab after the terrible memories of the partition. But the Meos were living quite normally.

During the first general elections, Muslims generally voted for the Congress because they were afraid that if the Congress was defeated, no other party might be in a position to protect them. But in the second general elections they distributed their votes among the different parties just as the majority community did. They were no longer afraid about their future.

The wounds of partition had undoubtedly been deep. But time had a way of healing the wounds and wiping away the tears. That had been so everywhere.

No two people had fought each other more bitterly than the Germans and the French. But both peoples had been brought together in NATO. A former 'Hitlerite' General commanded the allied armies from Paris.

No people had been engaged in war more frequently than the French and the English. But the enmities of the past were buried in the face of danger from Germany. On the eve of the fall of France in the Second World War, the British Prime Minister underlined the strength of the Anglo-French alliance by offering France a union with England.

The bitterness between the Germans and Russians during the Second World War knew no bounds. But while West Germany and the Soviet Union were still far apart, the Democratic Republic of (East) Germany and the Soviet Union had been able to forget and forgive. East Germany, it could be argued, was communist, but it was German all the same.

The Balkans had been the powder keg of Europe. But after the Second World War, whatever be their troubles with the Soviet Union, they had been able at least to get over their old regional disputes.

For decades, Western policy in the Arab world was based on the assumption that, firstly, the Turks and the Arabs would never unite, and, secondly, the Wahabi rulers and Hashemite rulers could never come together. Who would have imagined a few years ago that the Iraqis

and Turks would not only be friends but allies or that King Saud would embrace his Hashemite brethren in Iraq and Jordan ?

For that matter, who would have imagined that Pakistan, which was the child of separate electorate, would adopt joint electorate ?

There was a time when there were anti-Indian riots in Rangoon. Today no two countries in the world were more friendly than India and Burma.

Historically, Afghanistan had been the pestilential breeding ground of invaders and iconoclasts who had been the bane of India. Who in India or Pakistan remembered all that now ? Anyway, Afghanistan was today one of the best friends of India.

If anyone had said immediately after Hiroshima and Nagasaki that the Japanese would ever forgive the Americans, he would have been dismissed as a visionary. Yet the miracle had happened.

Almost all people in the world had fought some other people some time or other in history. But the enemies of yesterday were the friends of today and the enemies of today could be the friends of tomorrow. Perhaps the younger generations would succeed better than their fathers in normalising the relationship between India and Pakistan. The older generation still lived in the past. It still fought yesterday's battles after the war was over. The time for *jehad* was over. It was quite a few centuries too late.

Some day or other, Pakistan would realise that the road of enmity with India would take her nowhere.

Khrushchev said in a speech in Bombay, "Whether communist countries like it or not, capitalist countries exist. Whether capitalist countries like it or not, communist countries exist. Why not agree to co-exist?"

Similarly, thought Ram Singh, whether India liked it or not, Pakistan had come to stay. And whether Pakistan liked it or not, India was there to stay. India was not going to disintegrate.

In India today there was a greater degree of acceptance of the permanency of Pakistan than at any time since the partition. India had enough territory, a large enough population—she was actually hoping that it would decrease—and vast potential resources to build herself up. She did not want anything from Pakistan.

Though not as big as India and potentially not so powerful, Pakistan was not an insignificant State either. Barring troubled Indonesia, she was the largest Islamic State in the world. She had some of the richest wheat, cotton and jute lands of undivided India. She had some of the best fighting material in the world. With her two wings in the West and the East, she was a natural window to the Middle East and Southeast Asia for the 'hinterland' of India.

Somehow, Pakistani leaders were not reconciled to the India that had emerged out of the partition. They

were still hoping to expand at the expense of India. It was not for nothing that they described Pakistan as 'moth-eaten' when her frontiers were demarcated.

But mere hatred did not help an individual or a nation. The two countries were destined to be together and they could as well try to profit by their proximity. There could be greater trade between the two countries. There could be greater cultural exchanges. Some of the travel restrictions could be withdrawn.

Ram Singh had experienced in Pakistan both the rigidities engendered by suspicion and the warmth of friendship. The faces of the security officers instinctively grew tense as they sighted a passport bearing the symbol of the Asoka lion capitol. Pakistanis who travelled to India made similar complaints about the attitude of Indian officials. But when one met old friends at the air port, one forgot the irritations and remembered only the friendship.

There was, Ram Singh thought, one basic difference between the official attitude towards Pakistan in India and the official attitude towards India in Pakistan. In India, at the highest levels there was no hatred for Pakistan. The hatreds were confined to the lower echelons. In Pakistan on the other hand the dislike of India was evident at all levels. Even if the Indian Government managed to reach an understanding with the Pakistan Government, it was more often than not sabotaged by the bureaucracy there.

In India, people who had aided the Muslim League before the partition and helped in the formation of Pakistan were allowed to join the ruling party. In Pakistan on the other hand, anyone who had been pro-Congress or pro-Indian at any time was suspect. One of the former Chief Ministers of Bahawalpur had thought it necessary to file a libel suit when a report was published in one of the Pakistan newspapers that at one time he contacted Sardar Patel to offer the accession of Bahawalpur to India. The ex-Dewan realised that if he did not clear himself of the charge, it was the end of his political career in Pakistan. Ram Singh could not imagine anyone in India filing a libel suit over a press report that during the troubled days of partition someone had thought of acceding to Pakistan.

Kashmir was undoubtedly an important problem. But it was difficult to believe that relations between the two countries could never improve unless it was solved. In any event, the world was beginning to realise that the Kashmir problem would most likely be one of the "permanent unsolved problems" of the world. Kashmir was like many other problems which still posed a challenge to statesmanship but did not threaten the peace of the world, whatever the partisans on either side might say.

There was, for example, the problem of Ireland at Britain's doorstep. Mr Eamon De Valera was still appealing to the United States for help in ending

the partition of Ireland. There could be no doubt about Irish feeling in the matter, i.e. the feeling of the majority of the people inhabiting Ireland. If a plebiscite were to be taken in Ireland as a whole, Britain stood no chance of winning it. But the people of Northern Ireland, at least the majority of them, felt equally strongly in favour of the *status quo*. And there would be trouble in England if any British Government were to give up Northern Ireland. In Asia and Africa, one automatically sympathized with the Irish in their plea to end the artificial partition. But Northern Ireland was no colony of Britain. It enjoyed free parliamentary institutions.

Ram Singh was convinced that any Indian Government which lost the Kashmir valley to Pakistan would have to reckon with the opposition of the entire people of India. India could no more 'give up' Kashmir than the United Kingdom could 'give up' Northern Ireland.

The Irish leader, while reiterating his demand for a united Ireland, had made it clear that the Ireland of his dreams had to be realised peacefully. He had said, "There is no principle of right or justice on which the partition of our country can be based. But we do not want the United Ireland brought about by violence."

The Government of India had made a 'no-violence' declaration about Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. India waited for Pakistan to follow suit in regard to territory on this side of the 'cease fire' line.

If the partition of Ireland was an old problem, the partition of Germany was a new one. There was no doubt that in the event of a plebiscite, held throughout Germany, East Germany would be liquidated. The socialist system would be repudiated by the majority of the people at the present stage of its development—whatever they might do twenty years hence or fifty years hence. But East Germany and her ally the Soviet Union would never be party to any scheme of reunification which would involve the giving up of socialism or communism in East Germany. Thus there was one right—the right of West Germany to seek reunification on the basis of free elections conducted under authorities in whom she had confidence—pitted against another right—the right of East Germany to hold what she regarded as socialist gains. West Germany knew that time was not in her favour, just as the Pakistanis realised it in regard to Kashmir. But West Germany had declared that she would not use force to bring about reunion. Any forcible violation of the existing lines of division, whether in Germany or in Kashmir, would mean war.

There was the Oder-Niesse frontier which Poland had proclaimed to be her “frontier of peace”. West Germany was not prepared to accept that frontier. But there too, she had declared her willingness to pursue her objectives peacefully.

The Formosa issue threatened at one time to disturb world peace to a far greater extent than Kashmir

ever did. But the situation was saved by People's China restraining her hand.

How was the problem of Viet Nam going to be solved? There was no doubt that South Viet Nam felt as strongly about the democratic ideology as North Viet Nam felt about the communist. The Geneva agreements envisaged elections to decide the future of the country as a whole. The North was prepared for these elections but not the South. It was no use talking about plebiscite and internationally-supervised elections only for Kashmir.

Perhaps one day these problems would be solved when one had given up all hope. At one time it seemed that the Russians would stay in Austria permanently, but one fine morning the Soviet Union pulled out. Similarly, the Finns at the end of the Second World War had never expected that the rulers of the Soviet Union would ever give up their naval and military bases which they had secured there after a good deal of trouble. But there too the Russians did the unexpected and bade the Finns good-bye.

India believed that one day, the Pakistani armies would be compelled to vacate the occupied territories of Kashmir and that the administration of the Kashmir Government would extend there. There was no harm in Pakistan nursing the hope that one day the Indian Army would give up the valley and allow it to fall into

the lap of Pakistan—no harm provided the Pakistanis would give up the cry of *jehad*.

The Saar, Danzig, Trieste and a host of other names had in their time been symbolic of problems that appeared incapable of being solved. No one thought of them now. The same thing might happen to Kashmir.

When one really thought of it, the wonder was not that there were so many Indo-Pakistan problems but that there were not more of them. The partition of such a huge country was no easy matter. More important than the existing problems was the fact that deep in their hearts the peoples of India and Pakistan yearned to forget the bitterness of the past and be friends. Both had paid a heavy price for fanaticism. India had lost her founding father and Pakistan her most brilliant Prime Minister. That ought to be adequate warning to both to let sleeping dogs lie. If they maintained their equilibrium in the present, the future would take care of itself.

CHAPTER XX

A FAREWELL TO ARMS

The bugles sounded the 'cease fire'. The muzzles of the field guns were covered. The gun crews were resting.

Those who had joined the Army temporarily were reconciling themselves to the day when they would slip out of uniform and go back to civil life.

Leaving the Army was a wrench. All partings were sad but they were inevitable. And for Ram Singh there could be no question of parting in a real sense. The 'cease fire' was there but the battle would continue to rage in the minds of men and he, like every other Indian, would have to participate in it.

But memories of the uniform lingered. It had not been as easy for him to adjust himself to it as it was for the tailor to make it. For instance he never realised the value of the peak cap till he was caught without it one evening in Secunderabad. That happened just after the police action. A curfew had been clamped on the city. Ram Singh was writing a despatch about the police action. The hotel room was rather stuffy and he wanted some fresh air. But hardly had he stepped out into the street when he was challenged by

a burly Sikh sepoy. It appeared that he was not 'properly dressed,' so he was produced before a Subedar Major who was responsible for the patrols in that area. The J.C.O. was baffled. Never in his thirty years of service had he had occasion to arrest a Major of the Indian Army for going about in his uniform without the cap ! Ram Singh was as confused as the J.C.O. was shocked. The way the Subedar Major talked about the importance of the cap, it almost appeared to Ram Singh as if the J.C.O. would have regarded it as a lesser offence had he come out naked but with the magic peak cap on.

That was Ram Singh's first lesson about the difference between life in 'civvies' and in uniform. In civil life, the hat was a convenience. One wore it or not as it suited one. In the Army, however, one had to wear one's peak cap or beret or jungle hat whenever one appeared in public in uniform. The peak cap or other prescribed headgear was an inseparable part of the uniform. One had to wear it whatever the weather.

But if Ram Singh was caught on the wrong foot over the hat affair, he had, by disobeying Army rules, saved the exchequer a few thousand rupees and, indeed, helped the Army itself. He had been specially flown to Poona and rushed by jeep to Sholapur to join the column marching into Secunderabad. But, as often happened in the Army, the base commander at Sholapur had no instructions and he refused to provide any transport or other facilities to

proceed beyond Sholapur. Not only that, he issued instructions that those who were not allowed to go beyond could not return to Poona but had to remain in Sholapur.

There was no time to obtain official sanction from New Delhi. If the Estimates Committee or Public Accounts Committee was to be denied an occasion to point to another instance of 'infructuous expenditure,' Ram Singh had to disobey the orders of the local senior officer.

It would not have occurred to any regular officer of the Army to disobey a superior officer. It would not have occurred even to Ram Singh had he been steeped in Army traditions a little more. But he was green and decided to proceed to Secunderabad on his own. He packed his luggage at three in the morning, strapped it on his back and went out towards the main road. He guessed that many lorries must be going towards Secunderabad carrying supplies and he wanted to join one of these supply columns. He had not been wrong. There was a convoy lined up. A lieutenant-colonel approached Ram Singh as he sighted him and shouted to his junior, "Here is the officer we are looking for !"

Ram Singh's heart sank. So these officers, he thought, knew that he was trying to run away. It would really look silly if, after having been sent to Sholapur with top priority permits to write about the police action, he were to be kept under guard in Sholapur

—that was what he imagined would happen to him now that he had been ‘found out’.

But he was mistaken. It seemed the lieutenant-colonel was only looking for a convoy commander. The officer who was to have taken the convoy suddenly fell ill and there were no other officers to spare. Ram Singh knew that not having had any military training, he really had no business to take on the job of a convoy commander but he also knew that there was no opposition on the road and no snipers and there was no risk involved. So he took the chance and instead of a seat in one vehicle which he had hoped for, he found himself in charge of a convoy of sixtyseven vehicles and an escort of a company of tough Gurkhas.

All armies in the world muddled through. They laid down elaborate plans but something always went wrong with the plans and there were ‘snafus’ (snafu : situation normal, all f -- d up). Some of the ‘smart’ soldiers would be regarded as stupid by all civilian standards. There was, for instance, the case of the orderly to a senior officer at Sholapur. In his vain efforts to persuade the base commander to let him go to Secunderabad, Ram Singh decided to exert some pressure on him through a Brigadier whom he knew well and who happened to be in Sholapur. He went to a house which he knew had been allotted to the Brigadier. He was halted by the Brigadier’s orderly Ram Singh asked the orderly, “Does Brigadier so-and-so.

stay here ?” The orderly replied, “Sir, the Brigadier—the emphasis was on ‘the’—stays here. I don’t know his name.” Ram Singh was rather intrigued. He had definitely seen this orderly with the Brigadier a few months back. Surely he must be knowing the Brigadier’s name. “Are you sure you don’t know the Brigadier’s name ?” Ram Singh asked him. “I am telling the truth. Why should I lie ?” the orderly replied.

“How long have you been with the Brigadier ?” asked Ram Singh.

“Twenty years,” the orderly replied.

“How is it you don’t know his name ?” pressed Ram Singh.

“Sir, I never had occasion to know his name,” said the orderly.

“How do others call him ?” asked inquisitive Ram Singh.

“First he used to be called ‘Major Sahib’. He was a Major when I was attached to him. Then he was known as the ‘Colonel Sahib’. He was first a lieutenant colonel and then a full colonel. Now he is known as ‘Brigadier Sahib’. Whoever comes here asks me, ‘Is Brigadier Sahib in ?’ And I reply, ‘yes’ or ‘no’.”

Ram Singh took the convoy from Sholapur to its destination in Rajasur, half-way to Secunderabad. From Rajasur he got a lift in a fifteen hundred weight

which was carrying 'rations on hoof'. The front seat being occupied, he had to sit with the goats and sheep. It was not heroic to march into Secunderabad in the company of bleating goats but it was better than being held up in Sholapur.

Such scrapes earned for Ram Singh and his colleagues similarly placed the sobriquet 'Hyderabad Majors'. It was a term well understood in the select circle of Army public relations. It was both complimentary and uncomplimentary, complimentary in the sense that the Army could rely on them to get a job done and uncomplimentary in the sense that they had no 'military bearing'.

Rather belatedly, the 'Hyderabad Majors' set about acquiring that bearing with more or less success. The 'military gait,' Ram Singh found, was simple enough. One had only to pretend that one was on a very important mission and walk fast with a pre-occupied air even if one was only going to the bathroom. While dignity and leisureliness were the badge of a gentleman in civil life, the army's emphasis was on whatever was regarded as 'smart' and 'efficient'. In practice, the adage "more haste, less speed" applied as much to the army as to the civilian.

Of all the things he tried to learn in the Army, the most difficult for Ram Singh was the Army salute. It took a veteran J.C.O. one week to teach him what

passed for a salute. He would never forget the conspiratorial atmosphere in which he learnt his elementary saluting lessons. First of all, he would close all the doors and windows of his room so that the regular army officers would not know that he was learning how to salute. Then the J.C.O., a stickler for discipline, would salute him and stand stiffly at attention. It was their mutual understanding that the 'Hyderabad Major' had to order the Subedar to teach him how to salute. This procedure, the J.C.O. had explained, was necessary because Majors were not supposed to salute a J.C.O. Ram Singh would bark out, "Subedar Sahib, I order you to teach me to salute." The J.C.O. would then hold his hand and teach him the correct 'angle' of salute.

Of all his experiences in the Army, the most moving was a soldier's funeral. The first funeral Ram Singh attended in the frontline was that of a Kumaoni who had died of a mortar wound. As his comrades carried the body on a simple bier, they said the *Ram Nam*. Three volleys were fired in the air as the pyre was lit. There was no hatred for the enemy as the flames licked the body. There was a dignified acceptance of the inevitability of death combined with a determination never to rest till the goal for which one's comrade died was reached.

The comradeship of arms engendered a spirit of utter selflessness and consideration for each other,

deep attachments and loyalties which only those who had gone through a common danger could feel. It was this that had made the soldier through the ages to face cheerfully the privations and perils of war. The spirit of comradeship—the *camaraderie* of arms—cut through all distinctions of race, language, caste and province and even nationality. Ram Singh felt the strength of the bond as a result of an apparently trivial incident. He had been climbing a tough hill feature along with some others. Feeling unusually exhausted, he took out a packet of chocolates he was carrying. Chocolates and sugar were very good to replace energy lost while climbing.

He had just swallowed the bit of chocolate when he felt the pangs of guilt. He wondered why he felt so uneasy ; then he realised that it was because of that chocolate. He had been inexcusably selfish. No one had watched him eat his chocolate but that only made his position worse in his own eyes. He knew that if any of his comrades had opened a packet of chocolates, they would have shared it with him. Was it not his duty to find out whether anyone else would share the chocolate ? Confession would be ridiculous. All that he could do was to see to it that such a thing did not happen again.

In the Army, one shared one's rations and one's accommodation with one's comrades. One shared each other's joys and sorrows. That was the romance of

war. It was that which gave glamour to the uniform.

But there were times when he felt that the romance of war was fraudulent, particularly when he saw a wounded man being carried to a distant base hospital. In some of the areas of Kashmir, the wounded had to be carried uphill and downhill for long distances by porters. In many places the frontline was very far away from the nearest jeepable road. When Ram Singh heard the groans of a wounded man on stretcher, he felt sorry not for the Indian soldier alone but for all soldiers who had been wounded and mutilated in war from the beginning of time. What did it matter under whom they had fought or for what cause they had fought? It was a horrible thing that healthy young men should have to be sacrificed at the altar of the God of War. Cannon fodder was cannon fodder whether it was Indians or Pakistanis, Britons or Spaniards, Germans or Russians. Medals, ribbons, parades, all lost their meaning when the cause of all this was man's inability to make peace with his fellows. But then a healthy nation had to be ready for the sacrifices of war if it was not to go under. Pacifism could be worse than war.

One talked of 'quiet heroism'. The phrase appealed to Ram Singh particularly after a visit to Poonch.

Here was a town under siege. Forty miles of enemy territory lay between Poonch and the nearest

Indian Army piquet. The only contact with Poonch for months was by Dakota.

One expected to find a tense army in Poonch, the lines on the faces of the men telling an eloquent tale of dangers faced and greater dangers ahead. But not only had Poonch survived but its ordeal had left no visible trace on the men. They laughed and joked and lived just as they would have done in Jammu or Srinagar.

One did not chase a fox from a jeep. But that was what Ram Singh did once in Poonch without being conscious of it. He had gone with a couple of Army officers to a State force piquet in Poonch after visiting Kumaonis and Gurkhas. He stayed with the State forces longer than he had planned and it was quite dark by the time he returned by jeep.

The party was returning to headquarters when it was fired at. Tracer bullets shot past, some ahead and some behind as the jeep lights were switched off and the vehicle sped in pitch darkness. There was not even starlight to help the driver, for the stars were hidden by clouds. The only thing that resembled the stars were the tracers. The driver of the jeep must have been born a cat in his previous life, for no one else could have manoeuvred the vehicle in such a murky night. After driving on for what seemed an hour—it could not have been more than three or four minutes—the senior officer pronounced that the danger was past, and the lights were switched on.

What did they see if it was not a fox running straight ahead for dear life! It had come in the line of the jeep after the lights had been put out and no one had noticed it in the darkness. They must have been chasing it for quite some time, for it was panting. There was a rifle in the jeep and they could have easily made short work of it if they had wanted to, but everyone enjoyed the chase and no one had the heart to shoot at it even with a pistol. It escaped ultimately by leaping into a field.

A little bravado was good for morale. Too much of it might be foolhardy but just the right amount did a lot to relieve the boredom at the front. The regulations said that no piquet within range of enemy guns ought to expose itself to enemy fire by lighting as much as a cigarette after dark outside a bunker. But the units in the forward line threw caution to the winds on Diwali night and the mud lamps they lit could be seen by the enemy for miles. The enemy did not provoke any incidents that night. Perhaps the Pakistanis enjoyed the sight of the Diwali lights as much as the Indian Army did.

Soldiers were known for their ability to improvise. The Dogras' piquet in Jammu, for instance, was infested with rats. The Dogras did not know the address of the pied piper but they had beer bottles. They somehow managed to make traps out of these bottles which were as effective as the ordinary rat traps.

A Kumaoni unit managed to supply running hot water for bath. The unit diverted part of the water of a nearby stream into its improvised 'bath house,' where the running water was made to flow over a piece of corrugated iron sheet heated from below with firewood. It was not exactly piping hot, and sometimes one wondered whether it was even lukewarm, but there was no doubt that the water in the 'bath house' was less cold than the water in the stream, and that was regarded as a real luxury.

Talking of hospitality, there was a Sikh unit which used to serve curds and *lassi* for lunch on a hilltop. Sensing that it would get stuck up on that hill for a long time, the unit had thoughtfully rounded up a buffalo and taken it to the hilltop. How the Sikhs managed to take a buffalo with them up a hill which the mules refused to climb they alone could say. But they had managed to convert that hilltop into a 'little Punjab' all right.

Every regiment had some sort of a mascot. The Sikh Light Infantry's mascot was a bulbul. The men of that regiment had just moved to a hill in Jammu and were having their first lunch there when the bulbul came down from a pine tree, hopped up the lunch table and made friends. It was a regular guest at lunch. It grew fond of beer, gin and lime and whisky. If anyone offered it water, it would just sniff at it and walk away without tasting it.

Even in the frontline, the Army managed to stage some cultural shows. Some of these shows, particularly a sword dance which Ram Singh once saw, were of a very high standard. He had forgotten the other items but the sword dance was an unforgettable experience. It was performed by a Kumaoni in the distinguished presence of several generals, brigadiers, colonels and other senior officers assembled for a New Year celebration. The Kumaoni was as lithe and agile as a tiger. But as he swayed rythmically, making languid movements with the *kukri*, one thought not of the tiger of the Kumaon hills but of a snake. Perhaps it was an optical illusion —*it must have been—but it seemed to Ram Singh that it was not a man dancing but a king cobra*. The rays of light that fell on the blade appeared to turn into the forked tongue of a serpent. The bag pipes contributed to the weird atmosphere. They were playing famous airs of Scotland but up there in Jammu, it sounded more like the music of a snake-charmer.

Ram Singh suddenly remembered that it was the night of the 'cease fire'. What he was witnessing, it seemed to him, was not just a sword dance but the swan song of the Kashmir war. He wondered how many men had been killed by the *kukri* used by the Kumaoni for that dance. Was it protesting against its being ordered to go back to its sheath ?

Anyway, that was the mood of the 'cease fire' in the frontline. The officers and men of the Indian

Army were happy that the war had ended. All soldiers were when wars came to an end. But they had come to Jammu and Kashmir to liberate the State and they found it difficult to reconcile themselves to the thought that they would have to leave the job half done.

The war had ended but peace was not yet in sight.

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